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Fanny Bickersteth.

Doing and Suffering:

MEMORIALS

OF

ELIZABETH AND FRANCES,

DAUGHTERS OF THE LATE REV. E. BICKERSTETH.

BY THEIR SISTER.

With a Preface,

BY THE RIGHT REV. THE LORD BISHOP OF RIPON.

PHILADELPHIA:
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PREFACE.

THIS little volume scarcely needs a Preface; it tells its own tale. It is composed chiefly of letters written by an elder to a younger sister, who was called for many years to endure much suffering of body and mind. These sisters were faithful disciples of Jesus on earth; both are now with him in glory.

The dealings of our heavenly Father with them were in some respects widely different. The one to whom these letters were written was afflicted to the eye of sense almost beyond measure. For many months her bodily pain, and sometimes her mental anguish, was severe beyond description. None who knew her well could doubt her union with Christ, so evident were the tokens of her fellowship with him; yet often she seemed to walk in darkness and had no light. Her faith was sorely tried; and at length it was only by slow and painful degrees the earthly tabernacle was taken down, that her immortal spirit might go free. It was not thus with the elder sister. She was ever radiant with joy and peace in believing. She appeared to live in the perpetual sunshine of her Saviour's loving smile. Yet she was eminently

fitted to sympathize with her suffering sister, and to suggest thoughts to the afflicted one which enlivened many an hour of weariness and pain. And when it pleased God to take her to himself she was spared the distress of a lingering illness; the call to her to pass out of time into eternity came with a suddenness which would have been terrible indeed had it not found her ready at once to arise and depart hence.

We do not think that any who read the following letters will be tempted to ask, "Why have they been published?" Are there not many in the Church militant whom the Lord hath chosen in the furnace of affliction? Are there not numbers of his own children to whom his loving wisdom has appointed days of anguish and nights of weariness? May it not comfort some of these to know how other pilgrims along the way to Zion, who have gone before and reached the everlasting rest, suffered in like manner, and were upheld by the grace which flows from the fulness of Jesus?

Should the publication of these letters contribute in any degree to this result, they will not have been published in vain. The comfort which was originally intended for one will overflow for the consolation of many, to the praise of Him who is the comforter of the cast down,—"a very present help in trouble."

R. RIPON.

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DOING AND SUFFERING.

CHAPTER I.

THE LAST RAMBLE—ELIZABETH'S MARRIAGE—FANNY'S INFANCY AND CHILDHOOD—THE SISTER-FRIEND—LETTERS ON THE WEDDING-JOURNEY—PROPOSED PLAN FOR THE WINTER.

It was a bright Sabbath in early June; twice already the village chimes had called to prayer, and had been succeeded by that still hour in a summer afternoon, which conveys so insensibly repose and refreshment, to the frail human spirits which have somewhat wearied in their strivings after heavenly communion and things unseen. Elizabeth and Frances Bickersteth had sought the retreat of a favourite walk in the grounds of Watton Rectory, their lovely and happy home,—a grassy walk, shaded by fir-trees, and presenting here and there the leafy bower of a beech

in its wealth of summer verdure. Little of the gardener's care was bestowed here; and for its wildness the sisters loved it, and marked how in God's world there is room for all; how lovingly the bramble and the wild rose intertwine their branches, and leave ample space for the rich mosses to flourish beneath them; while the tall trees, which had so lately been swept by wintry winds, now thrilled with the music of the woods.

The sisters wandered on more silently than usual; and yet heart beat to heart with a peculiar sympathy, and the unconfessed grief escaped at length from the younger: "Our last Sunday afternoon!" It was indeed so; the week had commenced which was to remove Elizabeth from a father's to a husband's roof, and, while it enriched the family band with a beloved brother, was to withdraw from the intimacies and the joys and the griefs of daily life, the sister on whom they were, each in their degree, leaning for guidance and sympathy. None, perhaps, had more reason to dread the separation than Fanny.

Many circumstances concurred to make the bond between herself and her eldest sister a peculiarly tender one. From the age of eighteen

months she had never known the buoyancy of vigorous health. In an unguarded moment, the eager child had climbed the back of a favourite chair, and a sudden fall upon her head placed her life, for several hours, in imminent peril. The first smile which indicated that consciousness was restored and immediate danger over, was reserved for her father on his return from his daily duties at the Church Missionary-House. The little one was given back to believing prayer; but the parents were henceforth to hold her with a light grasp, and to feel that a fragile treasure had been committed to their keeping. They could not, in after years, call the circumstance an *accident* which thus determined the colouring of their child's whole future life, but rather saw in it the entrance-gate to the *special*, and, in many respects, *solitary*, path of personal suffering, which a Father's wisdom had marked out as the "right way" for her to a "city of habitation."

It is not needful here to dwell upon her childhood. The nervous and physical irritability, the vague and undefined apprehensions incident to her state of health, which (as she afterwards told her sister) she was powerless to overcome and too proud to confess, some-

what separated her from a share in the occupations and tastes of her more vigorous sisters and brother, and the circumstance became too usual to attract attention that there were pleasures and sports in which all could join but Fanny, and special indulgences, on the other hand, reserved for her alone. Her nurses had always a word of praise for the gentle child who was tempted by no excess of buoyancy into schemes of mischief. With governesses, too, she was ever the pupil who did them credit, notwithstanding the serious interruptions of frequent illness. So years passed on, and developed a mind keenly alive to intellectual enjoyments and eager in its pursuit of knowledge. The extreme delicacy of her chest, on several occasions, made her a prisoner for the whole winter; but her daily walk was taken with undeviating regularity in her father's library, with Milton for her companion, and the occasional refreshment of one of Beethoven's favourite Sonatas. Her music is still a sweet household memory: the fingers always seemed taught by the heart, and awoke an answering sympathy. It might have been difficult, before the age of fifteen, to decide whether any deeper principle was at work than the influences of

a happy religious home; at that period she made a public profession of religion, and shortly after more decided symptoms of pulmonary disease awoke the fear that her life might not be prolonged beyond a few months. The solemn act of self-dedication, and her own uncertain tenure of life, led to a deeper and more earnest inquiry whether she had indeed taken her father's God as the guide of her youth, and had for herself sought and found the Lord Jesus.

But there were difficulties here she had not foreseen. The enemy of souls had offered no barrier to her ardent pursuit of mental culture; but when the knowledge of Jesus was her aim, all his unholy skill was directed against its attainment, and many and sore were her spiritual struggles. Her instinctive aversion to speaking of her own feelings had almost deprived her of the able guidance she might have gained from her beloved father, already a hoary veteran under the Captain of our salvation. To his children indeed he was ever the friend as well as the parent; but there were dark thoughts and doubts, which she fancied it impossible even to whisper to one who appeared to be ever walking in the beams of the Sun

of Righteousness. It was then that some casual word drew the attention of Elizabeth, and called forth a sympathizing note,* showing that her secret burden was both observed and

* "DEAREST F. :—A few words you dropped this morning seemed to show me that your path heavenward lies now through a dark valley, whose gloomy windings I have had to trace; and, though the journey was very dreary, I shall not have taken it in vain, if it enables me to hold out any clue to guide your steps. Your path seems lonely, for perhaps you dare not breathe your feelings to any human ear; but you little know how many of your fellow-Christians are passing the same road, and how many fervent and effectual prayers may be ascending up to heaven, from the standard-bearers of the army, that God would strengthen and help the weak-hearted. Are you not included among them? Shall these prayers ascend in vain to the Hearer and Answerer of prayer? Then you are not even without human sympathy, much less without His whose presence hovers specially over the scene of temptation. With regard to the trial itself, I know not whether it attacks reason in the form of argument; if so, do not argue, but repel,—not because you have not the best of the argument, but because you are now too much agitated to carry it on. Love, as well as faith, has a strong grasp of truth: cling fast, then, with the arms of love, and Satan will not persevere in a course which strengthens the power of love.

"If they are thoughts of sin and blasphemy, which your inmost soul abhors, your course is plain and easy. You are suffering, not sinning: wait on the Lord, and the trial will be removed; but do not let your conscience

understood, and that the most tender sisterly sympathy invited her confidence. Henceforth they had no concealments; and their chosen time of most familiar intercourse was the Sunday afternoon. It was not, then, surprising that the prospect of separation should throw a cloud over the bright June Sabbath which has introduced her to the reader. But there is a silver lining to every cloud: the young wife was not the less a loving sister, and Fanny was to possess, in the more permanent form of correspondence, the thoughts which continued to be so fondly occupied with her.

On her wedding-journey, she writes, "We have seemed as if by instinct to sympathize with each other's wants and struggles; and to me it has been very delightful if an elder sister's hand could help you over any stones which lie in our upward path, or encourage

---

be defiled with the fear of guilt you have not contracted. Dearest Fanny, let us thwart our enemy by growth in grace. We have slept idly in the midst of privilege: it is high time we awoke out of sleep. If I have read your heart wrong, burn this note; you will not love me the less for having written it: if right, then take it, dearest, as God's voice speaking comfort through

"Your affectionate sister,

"E. S. Bickersteth."

you, even from the roughness of the way, to believe that it was just *the narrow path* so accurately described in our heavenly guide-book. This pleasant intercourse, dearest one, is not broken. The key once gained to the heart of a loved one is not soon lost. We will still try to support and cheer each other on; and if God will indeed give me his own rich blessing, with the thousand new and precious privileges he gives me with my dearest T., you know his gifts shall still be in common. Any strength he gives us shall still—shall it not?—be used for each other in the blessed service of true sisterly love. This day three weeks, I suppose, we shall return to my new home. I hope God will give us his blessing there,—the blessing of a holy, happy, Christian household."

And again, a fortnight later:—

"My own dear Fan:—I think, by writing this morning, my note may reach you before the sacrament on Sunday. You will excuse a hasty line written on my knee for want of a table. Dearest love, if I have been any help to you, it has been both a relief and a joy to

my own spirit. I am sure our own burdens are lightened when we strive to bear those of others. Would not intercessory prayer (that blessed path God has left open to those feeblest in body of his children) sometimes take off your thoughts from the conflict within, and cheer you with the feeling that, in the midst of your own weakness, God may be using you to impart strength to others? I think, dear one, it may be the enemy that harasses you with fears that you do not overcome your weakness enough in preparing for the sacrament. I know it is said, 'The idle soul shall suffer want;' but which of us, my Fan, would accuse you of *idleness* because you cannot join in our long walks? Is God less tender than your sisters? Does he know your weakness of *spirit* less than we do your *bodily* weakness? Throw yourself on him. We would not push you from us if you fainted and sunk on us for support. Will he?

"Your loving
'E. S. B."

Fanny was able to share this autumn in the pleasure of a few weeks at the sea-side; and the following letter was addressed to her there:—

"My own Precious Love:—If it is as cold and damp at Sandgate as it is here now, you will hardly get to church on Sunday, and, if you do, I know you will not quarrel with me for a letter. First, I must beg you to think of and pray for us as we draw near with our poor people to the table of the Lord. I think I told you how we all come up together in double row. It should remind us of the solemn duties we owe to these members of Christ's body, and of the work he has given us here, to build up a living, united church to his glory. But, oh, my dearest love, such a little cloud will sometimes seem quite to blot out the Sun of Righteousness, and make such darkness in my soul! Is it so with you? I think one of God's special ways of humbling spiritual pride and delighting in self is by permitting very small obstacles to make us stumble. When we are caught in the very cobwebs of the enemy, we see we are poor feeble insects; and yet, wonderfully elastic, pride rises before the pressure is removed.

"I was looking at 'Solomon's Song' this morning. Did it ever strike you what condescension is implied in the terms of relative love our Saviour appropriates to himself?

Love makes us necessary to each other; we are necessary to our beloved parents. I feel the gap it would now make to my own dear T. if I were removed from him; and yet He, in whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, calls himself our husband. Then we are necessary to his full joy. . . Our feeble efforts to love, to serve, are our Saviour's delight: he rests in his love; he joys over us with singing. Dwell on these thoughts, my own love: there is nothing like the music of heaven for silencing those owls and bats and noisome creatures that Satan stirs up from the dark caverns within.

"I look for real pleasure, my own sweet sister, in our winter correspondence. I do not wish to bind you by any promise, but I feel it would be better—it would be more like the happy hours when all were at church, and we talked together over the library-fire—if our letters were generally kept for each other's eye only. Tell me if you do not feel it also.

* * * * * *

"Your loving sister,

"E. S. B.

"September 25, 1845."

The following were written after her return to Watton:—

"I had been thinking of you this morning, and what subject I should choose for my letter, when, opening accidentally my Bible at the 'Proverbs,' I met with this verse:—'Man's goings are of the Lord: how then can a man understand his own way?' It struck me as such a sweet portion for you, love. How can we understand our own way? It is the plot of infinite wisdom, infinite love and tenderness: how can we fathom it? Its very perplexities are encouraging; and how perplexing it is when sickness seems, instead of purifying, to be crushing to the spirit,—when, attacking the head, it seems to deprive us of all power of thought and leave us defenceless to any assault of the enemy! Then, indeed, our way is incomprehensible; because He who orders it is also incomprehensible! There is some deep plan of wisdom and love we cannot read. If we could read always, why God's ways would be no more wonderful than our's, and our all would be committed to one like unto ourselves. Let us, dearest F., take the perplexities of our path, whenever they come, as traces

of the finger of that God whose ways are past finding out. There will then be more rest in reposing in the simple confidence of faith and love in his guidance, even than in tracing the loving plans of earthly friends, whose schemes are within our comprehension. Being blind, we shall be content to be led by a way we know not: our Father knows it; his eye is open; and he will guide us into no pitfalls, but even by the *right* way, unto a 'city of habitation.' Think of us at the sacrament to-morrow. I fear many, many lost sacraments will rise up in judgment against me. Now, when my cup overflows so with mercy, my heavenly Father may well expect some returns of gratitude.

* * * * * *

"Your very affectionate sister,

"E. S. B."

"November 8, 1845.

"This has been a busy day, dearest F., and you must forgive me if I send you a hurried letter: it is such a relief to my spirit to be busy; I can feel for you, my dearest love, under your present trial. Pray do not let the enemy take advantage of your disengaged

thoughts to turn them sadly inwards, amidst the shoals and quicksands of temptation. You are weak, and are therefore invited now to rest in your Saviour's arms. He does not call on the feeble to march with the flock, but simply to submit to be carried. If the Tempter tries to goad you even there, do not turn round to look on him, but hide your head deeper in your Saviour's bosom. I fear I can give you but little with reference to 'Solomon's Song;' but, if it has been in any way a snare to you, perhaps a few of the bright thoughts connected with its glowing imagery may interest you: at any rate, you will take the will for the deed. Where Scripture is figurative, it seems to call for the full use of the imagination,—to present most vividly before the mind's eye the object used as an illustration; that, having received its fullest impression, we may understand the antitype more clearly. I will only to-day bring before you the comparison, (ch. i. 9,) 'I have compared thee, O my love, to a company of horses in Pharaoh's chariots.' Imagine to yourself, dearest, a company of noble steeds, full of ardour for the race: you cannot call what seems to them such delight, labour.

They pant only for the signal to start; yet it is no headstrong, impetuous ardour. True, they need no touch of the spur, but they are obedient to the slightest motion of the reins. How full of grace and dignity are all their movements! It is a royal image, far removed from all the low drudgery of life. Now, compare the various images thus suggested to the mind with men's false views of our Master's service, or with our own most imperfect attainments. Contrast this image of joyful ardour with our heaviness and weariness,—this perfect submission, this regulated though unbroken energy, with the wild, irregular flights of enthusiasm,—his graceful dignity with the low vulgarity of cant,—and see whether in this one short sentence the Spirit hath not given us, with the touch of a master's pencil, a sketch of the Church of Christ as he would have her to be. It is not a command: he speaks as if he already deemed her such, to allure her, as it were, not to deceive the hopes he might so justly form. Let us on this holy day, dear one, pray for more of this joyful ardour in our Master's work, or, if it be the curb-rein he sees fit to use, let us remember

'They also serve who only stand and wait.'

It is growing late. . . .

"Adieu, dearest. Your loving sister,

"E. S. B.

"November 14, 1845."

An allusion to Torquay in the following letter requires some explanatory notice. Fanny's precarious health, and the short dry cough which told the tale of secret mischief, had attracted the attention of some dear and valued Christian friends of her father's, who, for a similar reason in their own family, made Torquay their winter residence. By these beloved friends, who seemed only half to enjoy their blessings till they had shared them with others, the kind proposal was made that Fanny should spend the winter with them; and, in tender consideration to the timid girl, a sister was included in the invitation. After some little delay, that the matter might be viewed on all sides, and counsel be taken of the best Friend, the parents gratefully accepted the hospitable offer, and, with the true unselfishness of parental love, were willing, for their children's advantage, thus to extend the breach in

the domestic circle which had been made a few months previously by Elizabeth's marriage.

"November 28, 1845.

"MY DEAREST SISTER:—The close of the week reminds me that it is time again to hold communion with you. How pleasant it is that, although separated from each other, we can still do so! I think it will make Torquay seem much nearer. There is a peculiar feeling of comfort in looking forward to that journey; it is altogether such a work of Christian brotherly love, it seems as if a blessing was specially likely to attend it; and I think, my sweet sister, when you look back on the past, you will acknowledge how graciously He who appointed weakness as your earthly portion has often given you a double portion of love, so that you have never been called on to stand alone. Surely, dearest, you can trust him for this winter. The stream of love may run in a different channel, but it will be the same stream which has so often refreshed you. We little know the issues of each change we pass through, for we cannot tell the end from the beginning; but when we consider all that happens to us on

earth as germs of eternal things, how many blessed combinations of heavenly love and intimacy in the world above may arise from passing intercourse! Journeys from which we may have shrunk may prove to have been the beginning of eternal friendships; strangers whom we may have feared to encounter may be a source of eternal joy. Eternity, if we could but realize it, throws a wondrous glow over time. Carlyle caught some glimpse of the grandeur and poetry it might impart even to the poor nineteenth century; but it is only the Christian can dwell in the future, because he alone can people it with images of true and real blessedness,—well-known and well-loved forms, whose new glories and increasing beauty may, indeed, task his imagination to the utmost, but which are not new to his heart:—

> 'Jesus, my Saviour, dwells therein,
> In glorious majesty;
> And him through every stormy scene
> I onward press to see.'

You know we shall pray much for you when you leave dear Watton.

"Your loving sister, E. S. B."

One more letter still found her at home:—

"December 6, 1845.

"My dearest Fanny:—As these are expressly Sunday letters, I will turn at once to the beautiful verse I have chosen for our portion:—'As an apple-tree among the trees of the wood, so is my beloved among the sons. I sat down under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit was sweet to my taste.' Flowers convey the ideas of grace, innocence, freshness and beauty, a sweet familiar joy, but not the impression of dignity or protection. They are suitable as emblems of Him who humbled himself to become even as one of us, a brother sharing fully in all our joys and sorrows, a familiar friend; but they are not adequate to convey any full conception of our divine Protector. He who is the Rose of Sharon and the Lily of the Valley is immediately after reckoned among the trees of the wood; yet, by an exquisite touch of poetry, it is a flower-bearing tree to which he is compared,—a flower, too, distinguished for the peculiar delicacy of its bloom. Do you not catch the image of delicate tenderness united to full protection? The traveller

is weary; an Eastern sun has been beating down upon him, and the fatigue of travelling, joined to the burning heat, has produced complete exhaustion; a spreading tree offers its cool shade, and from its branches hangs luscious fruit ready for his immediate use. What an image of rest and refreshment! Do you wish to see the original of the picture here presented to your view? Where can you look for it but in Him who says, 'Come unto me, all ye who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest'? Dearest Fanny, our heavenly Friend would have us at rest. Would he delude us with such an image of repose as that I have just brought before you, if he did not mean us to enjoy it? Rest, too, blended with enjoyment; fragrant fruit combined with pleasant shade; a rest that would strengthen and invigorate the traveller to pursue his way rejoicing. This is the rest Jesus gives; these are the hours of refreshing we must seek from him. And let us ask in faith, nothing wavering. He is faithful that has promised.

"Your loving sister,

"E. S. B."

CHAPTER II.

JOURNEY TO TORQUAY—A NEW HOME, AND ITS ENJOYMENTS —LETTERS ON SONG OF SOLOMON—FANNY'S DANGEROUS ILLNESS—MENTAL DISTRESS—LETTERS FROM HER FATHER.

SHORTLY before Christmas, under the escort of their kind friend, Fanny and her sister removed to Devonshire, to make the experiment whether a winter in its mild and healing air might prove effectual in arresting the progress of disease. If the cherished home-bird had left the nest with some misgivings, they were soon dispelled by the truly parental kindness with which she was received; and she learned that her own privileged home was not the only happy Christian household where the law of love was recognised as the ruling and animating principle. Her letters could not but reflect some of the varied enjoyments in her new home, and with reference to them Elizabeth writes, Jan. 9, "I think we should extract as it were the essence of every moment of earthly happiness, and view it as a pledge and

earnest of better things to come. The glowing delight of being beloved, and loving warmly in return,—the keen intellectual pleasure of striking and eloquent thoughts,—the swelling, half-undefined emotions excited by lofty music or magnificent scenery,—will they not all find a prototype in 'that sober certainty of waking bliss' purchased for us by the blood of the Lamb? How very, very blessed our Redeemer, the Fountain of all this bliss, will be throughout all eternity! And when we look back on our little journey through life, how reasonable all its trials and temptations and conflicts will appear! Shall we not wonder that, when such a height was to be attained, we had so little up-hill in our course? We shall feel that we did not climb the steep ascent ourselves: there was One who bore us on eagle's wings, only now and then leaving us to try for a few steps the difficulty of the road, that we might know how much we owed him, and have the honour of some fellowship in his sufferings. His sufferings were mainly in inward conflict, and, though we are not called to bear the scourge, the nails, or even the cruel jeer, surely we *have* fellowship with him when we are led into the wilderness to

be tempted of the devil. There are hours when *we* too feel the power of darkness, *we* too sometimes feel forsaken. How well, then, he knows how to sympathize with us as only a sufferer could! You must have enjoyed a New-Year's sacrament." . . .

The Song of Solomon appears to have been the subject at this time of the weekly correspondence between Fanny and her sister, as the following is evidently one of a series; but few of the letters of this winter have come to hand:—

"Jan. 30, 1846.

"MY DEAREST F——:—I will continue our interesting subject; but, I confess, I must leave out now some verses at the close of the third and the commencement of the fourth chapter. I know they are full of spiritual meaning. T——, I believe, views the whole wondrous book as an allegorical history of the Church; but I do not understand these portions. I cannot fully enter into the Oriental imagery: therefore it does not speak home so much to my heart. We must remember the Bible is the world's inheritance: if every verse belonged especially to us, some would surely be left portionless: at least, their peculiar frame

and constitution of mind would be disregarded. I will pass over, then, to chap. iv. 7:—'Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee.' We dwell, dearest F——, as we have much reason to do, on the pardoning, forbearing love of our blessed Redeemer; but do we dwell enough on his admiring, delighting love?—that he really delights in the work of grace he is carrying on in our souls?—that those feeble desires, struggles, hopes, which we feel are so sin-stained, are yet beautiful to his loving eye?—that, seeing many things with eyes piercing even as a flame of fire, he yet sees not, but says to his trembling bride, ready in confusion to hide her face from the deep sense of sin and shame, 'Thou art all fair, my love; there is no spot in thee.' We know the delight of a word of heartfelt approval from those we love on earth,—how the mind treasures the precious words, turns back to them, dwells on them: let us, dearest, rejoice thus in our blessed Saviour's approval, and strive to win even more of it, remembering that the least working of grace in our souls is noticed and approved by him."

A long interruption occurs in the correspondence of this spring, and the circumstances of

which it is significant require some notice. It did not please God to realize the hope of parents and dear friends as to the renovating effect on Fanny's health of a winter passed in a milder air. Pulmonary disease was indeed checked and kept at bay, but only by the development of a still more painful malady. Reference has been made to an injury sustained in her infancy from a fall; and from an early age its effects were visible in symptoms of irritation of the brain. Long before going to Torquay, she was subject to seizures of unconsciousness and prostration, which bore much of the appearance of fainting-fits. They were, however, only occasional, and did not prevent either her enjoyment of the family and social circle or the gratification of her intellectual tastes. Now a different course of discipline was before her: to the privation of active interests was to be added prolonged and constant suffering, and for the remaining six years of her life she was, with rare exceptions, confined to her sick room.

The short Devonshire winter was passing away, and the time seemed drawing near for Fanny and her sister to leave what had become to them almost a second home, when a severe

accession of illness, in which the seat of active disease seemed transferred from the lungs to the head, placed her life for many days in the utmost peril. It was a time of deep anxiety at Watton. A few weeks earlier, a yet sorer bereavement had threatened the family, from the consequences of a serious accident Mr. Bickersteth met with in driving. This dark cloud was passing away, and already reflecting many bright rays of mercy and peace, when the sky was again overcast by the impending danger at Torquay. Her father crippled, her mother and sisters, in constant and necessary attendance upon him, could not have the comfort of gathering round what appeared to be her dying bed, and could only commit their absent ones in hourly prayer to Him who had so lately proved himself a present help in time of trouble. Her suffering, both from the nature of the illness and the severity of the remedies employed, was very acute. She had never, however, been wanting in the moral courage which could bear up under the endurance of pain; but there *was* a form of suffering connected with this disease from which her timid and sensitive nature peculiarly shrank, and to which the remaining correspondence will bear

frequent allusions. She always seemed to find it impossible to describe, except as bewilderment, confusion, horror, sights and sounds over which she had no control, mingling with every attempt at mental and devotional exercise, and forcing themselves upon her when a wearied mind and body craved rest and sleep. She could not divest herself of the impression that a state of mental darkness which so sensibly interfered with her wonted seasons of prayer and her conscious enjoyment of her Father's presence, must be in its own nature sinful. Perhaps the best idea of her state will be conveyed in letters written from Torquay by those who had the privilege of watching over her in these hours of trial.

"It is a bright contrast to turn from the worn and suffering body to the redeemed spirit ripening so fast for glory. She has no dread of death. Yesterday, after a severe attack, she said, 'One does sometimes long for rest.' I replied, 'There remaineth, therefore, a rest for the people of God; while you suffer so, we cannot pray for your prolonged life.' 'Oh, thank you: I wanted to ask you not; but I feared it would seem selfish.' Her entreaty is to be told *every thing*. 'They need

not fear,' she said, 'to tell me how ill I am: they might think the prospect of a bright end is better than a long, perhaps a dark, journey. If I am indeed near home, I must not mind the chariot being a little rough.' But to the longing for rest was added the chastened thought, 'I must strive to have my will sanctified to the will of God.' I said, 'Dearest, we should miss you.' 'I have done nothing but teach you patience, darling,'—meaning, precious child! we had had so much to bear with her: she has really taught us patience very differently,—by her sweet example. I then said, 'It is a comfort to think of that kingdom where there will be no more partings. I think you will be the first of our family to enter it.' 'Oh, what a mercy!' was her answer; 'the one who was so little able to be of any use on earth.' Afterwards she said, 'I lie all day and cannot think; but God generally gives me one bright season each day to help me through.' Her great trial is the fear, which she cannot shake off her mind, that there is something sinful in the mental darkness connected with the attacks. Dr. M. comforted her yesterday by assuring her there was not: she thought it such a Providence that she had

been placed under a pious physician, whose word she could rely on in such a case. She said, 'his assurance was better news than to have heard she should be well on the morrow.' We read yesterday a few sentences of the Litany for times of sorrow; I then left off, thinking her head had had as much thought as it would bear; but she said, 'We must have a few words, too, of praise:' so I closed with part of the General Thanksgiving. Mr. Cleaver has been a great comfort to her; she always seems to feel a special power in all his remarks, and she looked so lovely during his last visit, her eyes flashing brightly, her dear little face turned to him with such intense attention. The mental relief of his visits seems to make them quite *medicinal*. A bright star was shining in at the window. 'That is like Mr. Cleaver's visits,' she said; and when the birds began to sing, as they do most sweetly in the woods behind us, 'Mr. Cleaver spoke,' she said, 'of songs in the night.' Her little pleasures all partake of her graceful, lovely mind: watching the sunrise is her delight in the morning; and arranging the flowers brought by kind friends is another favourite amusement. I feel, dearest papa, while our

accounts are so sad, the only comfort we can give you is to speak of the grace given to our dear sufferer, and this will be to you also 'songs in the night.'

"After a severe struggle, disease assumed a somewhat more chronic form: this, however, tended rather to increase than to abate her consciousness of suffering. 'Oh, how I long,' she said, 'for the kind of attacks which I had the first week, when I seemed so much more ill! Then I only felt it when it was coming on and going off; now, though I don't know or see what is passing around me, I am feeling it all the time.' I asked her what she felt: 'A great terror; strange visions and sounds; and sometimes I begin to get better before I can speak, and then your voices sound perfect nonsense, like a strange language.' A yet darker experience is expressed in the following, in which she craves some severe remedy which had been withheld:—'Let me have some relief before dear Mr. Cleaver comes to administer the sacrament to me; for if my body was not in hell a few minutes ago, my spirit was.' But it was only in the extremity of suffering that such thoughts darkened the peace and gentle confidence of her childlike spirit. Her fears

as well as her other burdens were cast upon the Lord; and it was sweet to see her quick and grateful recognition of any help afforded: with the hurried utterance which marked her first recovery of consciousness, she said, after a long attack, 'Such a much nicer one! I wish they were all like that; I was in such a much nicer place,—almost in heaven: I saw flowers, only they got so entangled, and confused me; but it seemed as if those who loved me were caring for me, instead of horrid things laughing at me.' Again, 'God puts thoughts into my heart so much better than *I* can think them, and brings texts to my mind.'"

To quote from another letter:—"Last night, on recovering from an attack, she whispered something that I could not make out. At last I caught the words, 'Who shall lay . . . how does it go on?' I finished the text, 'Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?' 'Yes, that is it,' (you know her confused manner after an attack;) 'oh, now I know what it was; my happy Sunday morning. God brought that so home to me, and the other with it that E—— sent me;—"When they had nothing to pay, he frankly forgave them both." It is God that justifieth; that is such a comfort, because

it is him we have to answer to.' I replied, 'And Satan then cannot accuse us.' 'No; but what filth he can throw upon us!'"

The pastoral visits of her kind friend Mr. Cleaver, and the tenderness and wisdom with which he met her spiritual difficulties, were a special gift of God, at the time when his providence had removed her from her beloved father's care. On one of these cloudy and dark days, when suffering had known no intermission, and the light of her heavenly Father's countenance seemed veiled in impenetrable gloom, he stood beside her, and repeated, with deliberate emphasis, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have thee, that he may sift thee as wheat; but I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." "Who spoke to me?" she said; "was it an angel's voice?" So direct and sensible was the comfort, that the words seemed as if re-inspired for her, and long after he had left her, the echo of his message lingered in her ears, and a ray from heaven rested on "Mr. Cleaver's text."

Her father's letters were also a great source of comfort to her. "He is so open," she said; "he tells me every thing: that sentence comforted me so,—'No want of preparation on my

part could deprive me of the finished salvation of Jesus.'" She probably refers to the following, addressed to her sisters. (Elizabeth had now made the sacrifice of leaving her husband, and was sharing in the privilege of nursing.)

"WATTON RECTORY, April 6.

"MY BELOVED CHILDREN:—Truly affecting to us were your letters received this afternoon. Our beloved child's sufferings go to our hearts, and we can only bow in submission to our heavenly Father's wisdom and love, who assuredly orders all this trial for our child's good, as well as our own. We know we deserve severer chastisement, and we know this chastisement is full of loving-kindness. Be of good courage, then, my children; wait on the Lord still in faith and patience, and we shall yet see his tender mercies. It is our greatest trial that we cannot be personally present with our beloved child and minister to her; but all this also is ordered, and we feel grateful that she has such help in her sisters and Mr. Cleaver (give my grateful love to him) and is in the dwelling of such tender and sympathizing friends.

"Tell my dearest Fanny I feel fully assured that she is kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. I have seen in her letters, and in her general spirit, the marks that she is truly a child of God, and that her work is now simply 'looking to Jesus,' as the Israelites bitten by fiery serpents looked to the brazen serpent lifted on the pole. So looking, so trusting in the dying Saviour, no malice of Satan, no mental darkness, no want of preparation, can hinder her sure and complete salvation. Should we not meet at Watton,—which yet we would pray and hope for,—happy as our home has been, it is nothing to that far happier home in which we shall shortly meet and dwell forever. Let our affections be more set on things above, and all these severe trials will be rich in spiritual fruit.

"We grieve that our dear friends should be involved so painfully in our afflictions: but the Lord grant even to them in it richer and fuller blessings and mercies, as I doubt not that he will.

* * * * * *

"Your ever affectionate father,

"EDWARD BICKERSTETH."

We are tempted to insert two or three more of these "words in season;" for it may be that they will meet the eye of those who are struggling under a similar trial of faith, and to whom the counsel of an experienced Christian, whose spiritual insight had just been rendered more keen and true by a near approach to things unseen and eternal, will come with power and consolation.

"A WORD FOR FANNY:—All God's children have gone through trials to glory. Darkness must go before the light of glory, and the conflict before the triumph. Rest in God your Saviour. Your father loves you, your mother loves you, your brother and your sisters love you: you cannot doubt it. But all their love is only a drop out of the infinite fulness of God's love to you: let Jesus dying show you this.

* * * * * *

"Your own father,

"E. BICKERSTETH."

"MY BELOVED FANNY:—It is a joy to me, my dear child, that my letters have given you any comfort in your hours of suffering. Then do

we tread in the steps of our Emmanuel, whose office it is to comfort all that mourn, when we are comforting his tempted and tried children. All sin is in us, all righteousness is in Jesus; every thing a sinner needs is amply provided for him in that most precious Saviour. And he is so sympathizing, because he has been in our very nature, trials, temptations and sorrows,—has been in darkness, desertion and the deepest distress. His tenderness is infinite, his love is constant, his power almighty, and he never leaves us. Rejoice in him, then, always.

"If it be his will, how glad should we be to welcome you here again! His will be done!

"Your affectionate father,

"E. BICKERSTETH."

Sometimes by such seasonable words from her beloved absent parent, sometimes by suggestions given to those around, more often still by the direct teaching of the indwelling Spirit, her faith was sustained and enabled to interpret aright her Father's dealings. She was watching, on a cloudy day, two rosy breaks of light which seemed to borrow fresh loveliness from the monotony of the otherwise over-

cast sky. She pointed them out to her companion, who said, "Light amid the clouds, dearest: there will soon be everlasting light." She replied, "I was thinking on Sunday of those three things; everlasting light, everlasting love, everlasting joy: what a heaven it will be! I am thinking of these things all day: it doesn't tire me to have them out."

CHAPTER III.

THE DREADED JOURNEY—THE ALTERED ASPECT OF LIFE—GOD'S TRAINING AND ITS EFFECTS—FANNY'S RETURN HOME—PARABLE OF THE FISHERMAN'S CHILD.

HOPELESS as her state now was, and most precarious,—for her medical advisers were of opinion that any attack might prove fatal,—yet since week after week passed, and left her in much the same state, her parents became naturally most anxious to have her once more under their own roof. But the journey! two hundred miles! and the motion of the easiest wheel-chair increased the frequency and severity of the attacks. Her father's strong faith that the Lord would carry her through, prevailed over every difficulty. Speaking of the delay of a week, which seemed advisable, he says,—

"It may please God to make you then more able to bear the journey; and be assured, my dearest child, his will is your *safety* and your *happiness*, so that you need have no fear about the journey or its consequences: as thy day is,

so shall thy strength oe. Be not afraid; only believe. The great and good One we trust in and love, directs all our minds about it; and joyfully, my child, commit all to him. Much as we think it desirable to have you at home, we would not fix it till we saw it the will of the Lord; and then I know it is my Fanny's will too.

* * * * * *

"Your affectionate father,

"E. BICKERSTETH."

He had directed her to the true source of strength and courage. Her sister's letter says, in reply, "It is very sweet to see darling F, struggling with her fears. She told us in the afternoon half of them were gone. I asked her what relieved them. 'Just prayer, dearest,' she said." Her father wrote another word of encouragement. "We are thankful to find that Fanny's fears of the journey are diminishing. I think there are, probably, at least one hundred times in the Bible where God's people are told, 'fear not,' or, 'be not afraid.' I suppose it is because they are naturally so full of needless fears, and it is so difficult to cast them all upon the Lord and have full confidence of

heart and quietness of spirit in resting on him. Dearest Fanny will be encircled with the presence and love of God, and the prayers of multitudes of his children, and all will be well." The spiritual consolations of her kind friend Mr. Cleaver were not wanting at this anxious time. A letter from Torquay says, "Dear Mr. Cleaver has just left us. He came to see Fan., thinking she would journey to-morrow. His visits are her greatest treats. He said, 'When I thought of your journey, that familiar but most sweet text came into my mind, "He shall carry the lambs," the weak ones, "in his bosom, and gently lead those that are with young," that have any burden. And I remembered that Jacob urged his brother Esau to pass before him, because, said he, "The lambs and the ewes with young are with me, and if a man should overdrive them one day, the whole herd would die." And then I thought that if Jacob was thus tender, what must be the solicitude, the care, of *your* Shepherd for you, his weak, his burdened one! Again it came into my mind that when one of the servants of God, and he none of the weakest, Elijah, was going to journey, the Lord sent an angel to strengthen him.

The Lord said, "The journey is too great for thee;" and in the strength the Lord sent, Elijah performed it. Such strength he will send you. He will make rough places plain before you. Remember how, when he would send Moses into Egypt, Moses shrunk back; but he said, "Certainly *I will be with thee.*" So will he be with you, giving power to the faint, increasing strength to them that have no might.' His prayer with her was equally appropriate, entreating that in the next week 'he would enable us to interpret his will, and make it appear whether or not he would carry her up hence; whether he would permit her to take the earthly home in the way to the heavenly; and that, at all events, she might know there was a mansion preparing for her, that she had set out on another journey, and, though the way might be rough and the clouds sometimes dark and threatening, the end was *sure*,—she should reach a home where there shall be no more pain, where the Lord shall be her everlasting light, and the days of her mourning shall be ended.'"

Thus the six months was drawing to its close which had been so eventful to the dear sufferer. Her life was strangely altered: the varied

interests of a cultivated mind were exchanged for the monotony of compulsory inaction: nor had she the negative comfort of having forgotten the past, or having lost the power of comparing it with the present. Her memory was far more retentive of the events and impressions of previous years than of any thing that had happened since her illness began. The mind was clear and bright as ever, but every attempt to use it in the way of devoting sustained attention to a thoughtful subject was accompanied with the cloud of confusion and the threatening of an attack. Music had lost none of its power over her, but even the attempt to cheer her with some favourite hymn or song had to be checked, after two or three stanzas, with, "I must not have it, darling: it *works* me so." Books were, of course, laid aside, and her effort had to be constantly directed to *banishing thought*. Many hours of every day were at this time spent in a childish game, and, while thankful for the alleviation it afforded from the tedium of absolute idleness, the dear one's eyes would sometimes fill as she quoted Laila's words:—

> **"I would I were the little trifler once again**
> **That could be pleased so lightly."**

The aspect to sense had little to relieve the general impression of weariness and suffering, and those who loved her best were ready to feel that it were a selfish affection which could seek to retain her in the prison-house of clay. But her Father's thoughts were not as their's: he would now throw aside the lesson-books of human teaching and human knowledge, and take the training of his child into his own hands. Very silently, very gradually, the work progressed: natural irritability and self-will were by degrees subdued; her patient endurance of personal suffering and privation were from the first the subject of remark to all who had to do with her. "I never saw any thing like her patience," writes one of her nurses; "it reminds me of that, 'Let patience have her perfect work.'" She rarely alluded to any pain she might be enduring; and if the reflection of it in her countenance drew forth a sympathizing remark, it was generally met with, "It will soon be better, darling;" or, "It will be better to-morrow." Sometimes, when a severe remedy failed to give the usual relief, and unexpected attacks brought back the oppressive cloud, a few silent tears would bear witness that the flesh shrunk from the cross to which the spirit

bowed in submission; but in general she was cheerful even to playfulness; and before the close of these years of discipline she had learned the difficult lesson of living almost entirely beyond her own little world of disease and pain, and opening her heart wide to receive all the sympathies and interests, the joys and sorrows, of those around her, till it became proverbial in the family that "Fan's room was the bright place in all the house."

The 14th of May was at length fixed for commencing the dreaded journey: it was not accomplished without much suffering, and she was lifted from the carriage at the door of Watton Rectory in an insensible state. The wisdom of the step was, however, fully justified, both by the power which she manifested to rally from its immediate effects, and by the prolonged course of her illness, which would have rendered separation from her family so serious an evil. When asked, after the journey, whether she suffered more than she expected, she replied, "I did not know at all what might be the will of God concerning me: had it been his will, he could have spared me all."

Her return had set Elizabeth free to re-

sume the duties of her own home; but many thoughts remained with her suffering sister. The correspondence from this time could only be one-sided; but it was faithfully resumed; and the Sabbath, which was now a complete blank as to outward ordinances, was always cheered by a word of loving sympathy and counsel from Kelshall. Another device of affection was to embody in little allegories, so short and simple that she could hear or read them without injury, some of the thoughts which had given rise to perplexity or discouragement in the mind of the sick one. Such a one was the following:—

THE FISHERMAN'S CHILD.

The little Ina lived with her father in a cottage on the lonely beach. She was his only child, and her mother died when she was but an infant. All the tender recollections of love and care linked in the minds of most children with the name of mother, with Ina belonged only to her father's name. He had been to her nurse, father, mother, and even playmate: what wonder, then, if the little maiden's heart belonged to him alone? When

he was compelled to leave her,—as he now frequently was by the duties of his calling,—her little mind was ever busy planning some innocent device of love to please and surprise him on his return. At last she thought that she would decorate his favourite room in the hut with the mussels and other brilliant-coloured shells that were strewed about the beach. Full of her new project, the active child was up with the earliest dawn, and day after day saw her climbing, regardless often of the dangers of the returning tide, amidst the rocks where her coveted treasures were hidden. Ina's first thought had been to give her father pleasure by this fresh proof of her love; but by degrees her project itself, her pretty work growing under her hands, the many pleasing adventures into which it led her, engrossed all her thoughts. Her father frequently found her absent on his return: he missed many of her wonted endearments, and, besides, he trembled for the dangers into which he knew the thoughtless child frequently ran.

One evening, then, when she returned with a glowing countenance and a basket full of new-found treasures to the cottage, he called

her to him, and, kindly admiring her work, he added, "I have now a fresh proof to ask of your love." "What, father?" said the child, delighted at the thought of some new undertaking. "I wish you, Ina, to remain at home when I am compelled to leave you." "At home, father! alone in this room, with nothing to do! Must I look for no more shells? I find them now better every day, as I know more of the rocks and caves." Her father fixed on her an eye of tender reproach, and said, "I have, then, asked too great a proof of my Ina's love." This was more than enough; and, amidst tears and kisses, she strove to obliterate the remembrance of that moment's rebellion. The following morning he left her; the sun shone with more than wonted brilliancy on the wet stones left by the receding tide: she watched his little boat till it was but a speck on the water, then looked on the sparkling strand, then on her unfinished work, and a sad feeling of discontent and listlessness began to creep over her mind. "Surely," said the child, "it is very strange that my father should wish me to sit thus idle here. Oh, if he did but know the weariness of these long

hours!—these long, long hours!" she repeated to herself, almost unconsciously. "It was but yesterday I found quite a new treasure among yonder rocks. I meant to have secured so much of it to-day; and now I am shut up here alone, and I have nothing to do." Then she recalled her father's parting words:—"Have I asked too great a proof of my Ina's affection?" "No, dearest father," said she to herself: "you shall see you cannot count too much upon the love of your child. How foolish was I in thinking I had nothing to do! I am obeying my beloved parent; I am showing him my love. Is not this a sweet and blessed task? Was it not for this I began collecting all my little treasures?—only I had grown so fond of them I had almost forgotten I was gathering them for him." Then she thought of the sweet smile with which her father would reward her obedience on his return; and though the day was long and lonely, it was not uncheered by sweet moments of hope and love.

At first the times of her father's absence were but short, for he led her gently in the path of obedience; but soon a harder trial awaited her. His absence was prolonged day

after day; the little maiden watched vainly and wearily at the casement for his return. The want of his cheering smile made the tedious hours of her confinement almost intolerable; her little heart sickened for very weariness, and she cried, in the bitterness of her soul, "If he shuts me out from every thing else in this lonely room, why, oh, why does he not come himself to cheer his child's sad heart?" Dark thoughts then came in, such as the sweet child had never before known: she might at last have wholly doubted her father's love,—she might have felt quite forsaken,—but, as she looked listlessly round the room, her eye chanced to fall on one of the many contrivances arranged in past days by her fond parent for her comfort. The light of love once more shone in upon her. All the past came back upon her soul; memory recalled a thousand acts of tenderness long forgotten. Though the present was dark, the little Ina lived a few rapturous moments in the bright light of the past. The future soon caught its brightness. "How could I," said she, "distrust his love? He will soon return; and then I shall love him with a tenfold energy." Her hopes were not disap-

pointed, nor had she now many days to wait; but how joyful was her surprise when she found that her father had been himself engaged in seeking for her, on a distant shore, shells far more brilliant than she could have discovered amidst her native rocks! How rewarded she felt when he himself traced the pattern and aided her in her work! Then, satisfied with her simple obedience, he explained the perils from which it had rescued her; and the little Ina learned to rejoice in a sacrifice of love.

CHAPTER IV.

THE SUMMER OF 1846—ALMOST AT HOME—THE MARINER—THE SPRING OF 1847—ELIZABETH'S FIRST CHILD—THE BAPTISM.

THE summer was spent in alternations of hope and fear, though, with her beloved father, she could say, "What they call no hope is to me the most hopeful of all things." "As I was sitting with Fan this evening," writes one of her sisters, in July, "she repeated to me 'The real occurrence' with such emphasis of feeling, 'Even so I long to go, these parting hours how sad and slow!' I told her how we should miss her; but she said, 'The time is so short, darling: I have been very useless; but I shall not be so soon. I shall have a body like unto His glorious body.'"

In August, Elizabeth writes:—

"MY SWEET SISTER:—When I got up this morning, I thought, 'What can I bring before

my Fan that may be some comfort to her to-morrow?' Then I remembered how my mind had been dwelling on the child-like tone in which our church service opens. I had thought of our Father's full, free offer of pardon. I had thought how, encouraged by such words, we came, we told all, we said, 'Almighty Father, we have erred,' and then we were forgiven, and went away in peace. But what, thought I, would the Father do if one child were sick and weak? He is so gentle to all, he will be doubly tender here; he will not bid that suffering one search deep into her heart and try her spirit. He reads her at one glance: one gentle sigh, one prayer for pardon, tells him all. He will cut short her confession by such an embrace as the returning prodigal received, and bid her rest on his bosom in peace. I give you those two words, 'Our Father,' to rest upon. May they soothe you, dearest, on the morrow!

"Your affectionate sister,

"E. S. B."

The beginning of October was a time of aggravated suffering. One night, indeed, the summons seemed to have come for her. Two

of her sisters were keeping watch in her room; she slept, and they were exchanging whispered words about the rapid clouds, which were hurrying over a dim and watery moon. A restless movement recalled them to the bed, to witness for the first time the heart-aching sight of that loved and tender frame writhing in terrible convulsions. A hasty summons brought her father to her side. "She is dying," he said; for the rattling, laboured breath, and the death-stricken countenance, could convey no other impression. But it *was* not death,—only its *shadow*,—one of the billows rolling inwards towards shore; but many others were to follow. Her prolonged trial called forth the tenderest sympathies of her brother, and he expressed them for her in the following lines:—

"Suffering for thee, sweet sister, and sharp pain
For thee, the gentlest of earth's gentle ones:
Does the cloud gather o'er thy heart and brain
So darkly, and yet no repining tones?
Oh, hush, my own sad heart, thy faithless fears,
And quell or dry thy quick rebellious tears.

"She as a babe upon a mother's breast,
A child within a father's sheltering arms,
Unconsciously is lying: the unrest,
Brother, is thine,—thine all those rude alarms.

Still thy heart's beatings where she her's hath still'd,
Believing all is best that He hath will'd.

"Yet was our home so bright, so passing fair,
Some faint dim semblance of a home above,
And she the tenderest, loveliest angel there,
Around whom cluster'd all our dreams of love,
We thought that grief might never shadow long
What seem'd the fittest haunt for praise and song.

"And was it but a dream? and has the cloud
Once and again pass'd by us, threatening woe,
And shedding tears? and has its darkness bow'd
Our hearts once more in struggling sorrow low?
And has the sunshine of affection's mirth
Pass'd ever, sleep-like, from this beautiful earth?

"Nay! check your tears, sad sisters! pause and linger,
And check, sad brother! thy wild, wayward words;
Grief takes thy lyret from thee, and her finger
Sweeps somewhat rudely o'er the trembling chords:
Ye must not, when beneath the cloud, forget
That He whose love is sunshine loves ye yet.

"Methinks I hear his voice of pity saying,
'Ye clung too closely to your lovely home;
Your sister's spirit, children, is delaying,
To teach ye of a better rest to come,
Where grief is not, nor sighing, pain, nor tears,
But life, light, love, for everlasting years.'"

E. H. B.

These seasons of more acute suffering were always accompanied by added darkness and

distress. How could it be otherwise, since the *darkness was a part of the disease?* But her soul was safely anchored, and no lashing of angry waves could unloose it from its moorings. "I can't rejoice," she said at this time; "but I can't despair, for I can *cling.*" And, again, "When one is very near eternity, one should feel so afraid of a dark, unknown state, of which we can conceive so little, were it not for the assurance of being *with Christ:* that is quite enough. It is such a comfort to think that Christ not only lived for us, but died and laid in the grave for us. I used to have such a horror of lying in the grave; but when I thought Christ did so before me, it took away my fears." Sometimes a thought flashed out with the brightness of former days, as this:—"If Christ had enough in himself for perfect happiness through a past eternity, he surely will have enough for his children for a future eternity." In general, however, her mind was rather in the quiescent state of the weaned child, accepting the daily portion of suffering, and waiting her Father's will for its removal. "All these weary long days," she said, "will seem nothing when I get to

heaven: rest is waiting for me, and I for rest; we shall meet some day."

Elizabeth writes at this time:—

"Oct. 10, 1846.

"MY DEAREST FAN:—I know your poor head must not have much to-day, so each word must be precious,—*God's word.* This, then, is my message to you: 'It is *good* that a man should both *hope* and *quietly wait* for the salvation of God.' It is not *bad*, dearest, to be kept with heaven in view, month after month, waiting in suffering and inaction. It is *good*, the crown is growing brighter; it is *good*, the treasure in heaven is increasing; it is *good*, fresh beauty is clustering round the mansion preparing above. I won't add more. Much, much love.

"Your affectionate sister,

"E. S. B."

It would have seemed almost incredible to those who watched her at this time, had they been told that her life was still to be lengthened out for several years. So hopeless did the case appear, that no remedies which could

give even temporary relief were withheld, and the application of eight or ten leeches to her head was, at times, a matter of almost daily occurrence. Her doctor was well aware of the desperate nature of the means he sanctioned; but he said she had a choice of two deaths,—by bleeding, or by her bad attacks. The relief afforded by the most active measures was often very transient, and then her submission was sorely tried.

We find a little notice of Dec. 14:—"F—— was very ill; the leeches only relieved for two or three hours. She said, 'I did hope my head would have been "right" now: but no, I forget: it is all right, quite right.' She received, in all the simplicity of its natural reading, the command to let her requests in *every thing* be made known unto God; and thus not only many a care was lightened which some might think too trivial to cast upon him, but her soul was refreshed with continual tokens that, though clouds and darkness might surround her path, a loving Presence was with her and an open ear attentive to her requests. On one occasion, when the sister who had been alone with her during the severest part of her illness at Torquay, and to whom she had from

that time peculiarly clung, was obliged to be absent for a few hours, it was F——'s child-like prayer that her heavenly Father would avert the more serious attacks till her return. Her companion said to her, 'The afternoon has been all one great battle against the bad attacks.' 'Rather say,' she replied, 'it has been all one great answer to prayer, my darling: I am sure it is only God's hand that has kept me from them, for I am constantly on the verge of them. He doeth all things well.' 'Victorious Fan,' whispered a loving voice, as she successfully battled off one. 'Merciful Jesus! darling,' was the quick reply:—'that is the real truth.'"

The opening of 1847 found her in much the same state. On January 15, Elizabeth writes:—

"My own dear Fan:—How I should enjoy another happy hour with thee next Sunday evening! but, as I shall be quite alone, I shall spend part of the time praying for thee.

"Your little bark, my own darling, is very near the shore. You know the breakers run highest there, so you must expect to be tem-

rest-tossed: but your Saviour will not suffer you to be wrecked within sight of land: a very few rough waves, and you will be at rest. Paul does not say, 'I know *how* I have believed, but, I know *in whom* I have believed.' A *feeble* faith may cling to a *strong* Saviour, and be safe. If any family should trust a prayer-hearing God, we should. We seem almost to have touched his guiding hand. God bless thee, dearest, and give thee, as before, many mercies, and a quick eye to see them.

"Your affectionate sister,

"E. S. B."

Her brother's lines, written for her at this time, embody the same thought, and truly reflected her state of mind:—

"So He bringeth them to the haven where they would be."

"Yes, billow after billow: see, they come
Faster and rougher as her little boat
Nears evermore the haven. Oftentimes
It seems to sink and fall adown the wave,
As if borne backward by the struggling tide:
Yet, mounting billow after billow, wave
On wave o'er-riding, tempest-tost and shatter'd,
Still, still it nears the haven evermore.
'Poor mariner, art thou not sadly weary?'

'Dear brother, rest is sweeter after toil.'
'Grows not thine eye confused and dim with sight
Of nothing but the wintry waters?' 'True;
But then my pole-star, constant and serene
Above the changing waters, changes not.'
'But what if clouds as often veil the sky?'
'Oh, then an unseen hand hath ever ta'en
The rudder from my feeble hands the while,
And I cling to it.' 'Answer me once more:
Mariner, what think'st thou when the waters bear
Thy frail boat backward from the long'd-for harbour?'
'O brother! though innumerable waves
Still seem to rise betwixt me and my home,
Still billow after billow, wave on wave,
I know that they are number'd: not one less
Should bear me homeward, if I had my will;
For One who knows what tempests are to weather,
O'er whom there broke the wildest billows once,
He bids these waters swell. In His good time
The last rough wave shall bear me on its bosom
Into the haven of eternal peace.
No billows after: they *are* number'd, brother.'
'O gentle mariner, steer on, steer on;
My tears still flow for thee, but they are tears
In which faith strives with grief, and overcomes.'"

E. H. B.

In February, Elizabeth writes:—

"DEAREST FAN:—I should like to be your companion to-morrow, and to try to make some of the long afternoon hours pass more

quickly; but I shall make it a special subject of prayer for you, darling, that He who knoweth our frame will be more than usually present with you to cheer and comfort. That text has been rather on my mind lately,—'I have laid help on one that is mighty.' Your greatest comfort in your illness has been the willingness of all the dear ones around to help you. One unkind word or look that betrayed a weariness under your suffering would have given a sharp sting to every trial. Yet, my Fan, how powerless they have often been! How they have stood over you, unable to do more than sympathize! God says, 'I have laid help on one that is mighty.' Power and will both. What a blessed certainty of help this gives! What a resting-place!

> 'Tis enough that thou wilt care:
> *Why* should I the burden bear?'

"Rest here, my dear one. By-and-by, in his heavenly kingdom, God will have some happy, holy work for you to do. Now you are called to rest, and quietly to wait for the salvation of God. May he bless you much!

"Your ever affectionate sister,

"E. S. B."

The following will be interesting, as showing how the eyes that are opened to behold the beauty of the Lord Jesus will find, in the little circumstances of daily life, an open page telling of his grace and love:—

"My dearest Fanny:—As I was walking the other day, I found the road quite choked up in our village by a flock of sheep, which the shepherd could not drive on, because the lambs were so very young and weak. The poor little creatures seemed so distressed, and the village children were running after them, trying to drive them forward. It reminded me of that precious text, which I will give you to think of to-day:—'He shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom.' The poor shepherd I saw could not carry *all* the lambs; he was forced to drive them. But the bosom of our Shepherd can receive every weak one in his flock.

"The evil is, when we are strong, and our watchword should be, 'Run the race,' 'Press toward the mark,' we want to go to sleep by the wayside. On the other hand, when we are weak, and the shepherd would take us up so gently and bid us rest so softly on his bosom,

while he walks forward bearing us on our road, then we struggle to get down. We dare not lie still, even in his arms; we must needs walk, or crawl, or tumble, or, at any rate, do something for ourselves. 'Be *still*, and know that I am *God*.' Yes, dearest: here is rest and security enough. 'I am *God*.' I do not know how far your poor head will allow you to read this. I hope, please God, after one more Sunday I shall be with you.

"Your loving sister,

"E. S. B.

"Feb. 27, 1847."

The visit alluded to was a long and happy one; for it had been arranged that the first grandchild was to see the light at Watton; and as the little stranger waited for its arrival till grandpapa's birthday, March 19, the joy was very complete. Dear Fanny's sympathy was true and tender. She seemed to think that she had been permitted to linger in the borderland in order to give it a loving welcome, and that this new gift of love had been added to supply *her* place in the family circle.

At this time, Elizabeth writes:—

"My own dear Sister:—I know you will be only half, and the worst half of you, absent from us to-morrow. We too shall be thinking of you, and shall not, in enlisting our sweet unconscious little one into Christ's service, forget the poor, weary warrior who has so hard a conflict to maintain. My precious one! I can easily understand how light much bodily suffering would seem, if there were no mental conflict for you at the same time: both together seem a burden too heavy for you to bear. I have been thinking how exactly this corresponds with St. Paul's 'fellowship with the sufferings of Christ.' While the nails and the thorns pierced him, what a deep conflict there was in his soul! but now what glory beams around the Blessed One! You share his sufferings, and he sympathizes with you. By-and-by you shall share his glory, and rejoice with him. Only hold fast the thought, he sympathizes with you now.

"Your loving sister,

"E. S. B."

The notices we possess of these months are few and scattered, but they convey an impression of very oppressive suffering. On one

occasion we find:—"This has been a most painful day to our dearest F——: she had one hundred and thirty attacks, varying in degree, in five hours and a half; she was very feeble; but we could not deny the temporary relief which leeches, thank God, still continue to give."

Elizabeth writes, June 5,—

"My dearest Fanny:—May God give you a Sabbath of rest and peace, after your very suffering week! One more trial, dearest, is over, as far as its sorrow goes: only its precious fruits are left to you. Perhaps they are not visible. It is only on very warm spring days you see the hedges grow greener from your window; but they are growing really every day, and must have the rain and the storm, and even the frost that seems to nip them, to make them grow. The warm spring day will come for you too, dearest, and then you will feel how much the storms have done for you.

"Your loving sister,

"E. S. B."

CHAPTER V.

MRS. BICKERSTETH'S DEAFNESS—INTERCOURSE WITH HER FATHER—THE PORTRAIT—THE ROUGH AND SMOOTH HANDLE—SHADES OF FEELING—THE GENERAL THANKSGIVING OF 1847—LETTERS.

OUR readers have, perhaps, before now, missed from the sick-room the echo of her beloved mother's footstep, and the traces of her tender care and watchful nursing. Gladly would she have taken her natural place by the bedside of her suffering child, but the personal burden it had pleased the Lord to lay upon her was of a nature to keep them apart. Her extreme deafness, and Fanny's feeble voice, almost cut them off from intercourse, except such as loving looks could convey.

Her dear father's daily word of prayer at her bedside was often a very seasonable help; and she could at times so far conquer her natural reserve as to tell him some of her secret struggles. "I had so much doubt and fear this morning," she said to him, "till I cast my eye on that,—'The Lord's delight is

in them that fear him, in them that hope in his mercy.' Even when my head is worst I do try to hope in his mercy; and that seems to come so low,—low enough for me." Again she said, "The hope of being free from sin is so much more to me than of being free from pain."

In the constant alternation of better and worse, Elizabeth tenderly sympathized:—

"Another week has passed. To my dearest sister all weeks seem alike. But yet they are not alike. When she reads their secret history in heaven, she will find each week had its own special work in her sanctification. Each little illness that seems so like the last—we are ready to think it an endless chain of suffering—will then be found to have its place in God's own wisely-appointed plan. You know, dearest, when the sculptor begins his work, he strikes great pieces off the block; every stroke tells visibly; but when the statue is nearly finished, he takes a fine chisel, and strikes off but a little dust each time. You scarcely see the effects of the blow: yet then it is directed with most art and skill; then the

work is nearly done. 'That I do thou knowest not now, but thou shalt know hereafter.'

"Your affectionate sister,

"E. S. B."

"June 13.

"That I should know how to 'speak a word in season to him that is weary,' is not this what you want, my own dear sister? Is not your C.'s skill in speaking the word in season one great thing that makes you cling to her? See, it is the very office of *Jesus*. He knows so exactly what the weariness is, he has such deep wells of comfort, he can always speak the word in season. Suppose he seems to be silent when the soul is most weary: it is not because he knows not how to speak, because he cares not for the weariness: no, but because the word would not be in season. There are times when he sees silence will best exercise our waiting and submission. When these times come, will you not trust him? He has many gentle words still to speak, when their season comes.

"Your loving sister,

"E. S. B."

"Aug. 7.

"DEAREST FAN:—We were very sorry to hear of your renewed sufferings. We shall soon see the 'needs be' for each one of your attacks: meanwhile, dear one, to endure is a proof of strength, as well as to act. God is working as effectually in you, in enabling you to bear his will, as if you were doing great things for him.

"If the enemy tries to persuade you God is not working in you, ask yourself what would one in your circumstances feel without faith, or hope, or submission, or a God to look up to? The portrait of this godless sufferer is not my own sister's. I could draw her's,—a weary traveller, oftener in darkness than in the full light of joy, but struggling upwards, trusting in God, desiring that his will should be done though it appoint her continued suffering. It is the portrait of one who shall never be forsaken, of one very dear to God. Soon it will be a different portrait; but I cannot draw that; for it can be seen only by the bright light of heaven, and we cannot realize what it will be to have every sin and pain and weakness relieved and put far away. . . .

"Your affectionate sister, E. S. B."

The truth of "the portrait" drawn in the previous letter by the hand of sisterly love finds ample confirmation from the testimony of those who immediately surrounded her. She was truly "often in darkness." She said to her sister, "Can that be a true religion which fails me when I most need it? I don't mean, can religion be true, but can *mine* be a true religion?" She was reminded that Christ was in darkness and seemingly forsaken on the cross, and she was comforted. Her experience, too, was that of "struggling upward, and trusting in God." She said that even in her worst days she could *trust;* when her mind was unable to cry for help, or to plead with God, she could still *trust* in his mercy. Faith often rose a step higher, and she could tell those around how she rested on the thought that "the victory was all won for her, and she had only to look to Jesus." In faith she justified his dealings, and "desired that his will should be done," whatever suffering it might appoint for her. After a most suffering attack, she looked up and said, "He doth not *willingly* afflict. It is all right, darling; just what is best for me. I would have given a thousand pounds to have had

you yesterday, but God knew that, you know." It was said, "I sometimes fear lest you should suffer for our sakes." "You need never fear that: there is quite needs-be enough here," (putting her hand on her heart.) And, again, "How patient God is with us! how tenderly he continues his chastenings while they are needed!"

It is said that there is a rough and a smooth side to every handle, and that we may take hold of things by either: to her it was certainly given to choose the smooth side. "What a blessing *change* of pain is!" she said, cheerfully: "it is almost as good as *relief* from pain." It had been hoped that a course of shower-baths might be of use to her; but, apart from the difficulty of administering them in her extremely weak state, every attempt was followed by such aggravation of her symptoms that the remedy had soon to be relinquished. To her own sensation, the feeling of pressure on the head it induced threatened to be immediately fatal; and she said, in reference to this, while one day dreading her bath, "You know I prayed for rest; and perhaps this is the way God means to give it to me." The eye which could see light in the

cloud might well rejoice in the sunbeam. Her window looked out upon the garden and some quiet fields beyond it, and all the joyous things of nature in this beautiful season of the year found an echo in her heart. "Oh, I do think," she said, "it is such a mark of God's tender love that he gives us so many things to enjoy which are not necessary!" After her father's morning prayer with her, she said to him, "You must praise for Fan this morning, dear papa, as well as pray; for it has been such a night of mercies! God kept off the bad attacks when they seemed so near."

She was attended at this time by one of the nursing sisters, who, struck with her quiet endurance of pain, said, in her hearing, "She was a copy of patience." F—— spoke to her sister afterwards, quite in distress, about it:—"It reproached me so when Seitz spoke of my patience: only a minute before I had looked at the cows and sheep, and envied them their rest. God sees the impatient thoughts, you know. Is it not hypocrisy, when they are there, to repress them, and not speak of them to others, so that they *think* I am patient?" At this time Elizabeth wrote again:—"After a week of

suffering, what will my dear one's Sabbath be? Sickness is a hard master: he allows no rest on Sunday. So says Nature. But Grace says, 'Sickness is my Father's servant; and if he gives me no respite for the Sabbath, it is because he is doing my Father's work, and preparing me for that everlasting Sabbath-keeping which remains for the children of God.' It seems as if the courts of God's house, the preached word, the music of the Te Deum, would be a better preparation; but he doeth all things well. He knows what heaven is; he must know best how to prepare us for it. My dearest, may you be able to trust him in the darkness, and soon 'your light will shine as brightness, and your salvation as a lamp that burneth.'

"Your affectionate sister,

"E. S. B.

"Aug. 28."

The next accounts to Kelshall were for above a week more cheering, and Elizabeth's answer is a specimen of the quick appreciation of every varying shade of feeling which made her sympathy so precious and hopeful:—

"DEAREST FAN:—It has been very cheering to hear better accounts of you all this week, and to think of your having had so nice a reprieve from suffering. Please God, I trust you will have another better Sunday. Yet, darling, while I know you have been thankful for this relief, it has, perhaps, made the sense of *privation* greater. You have seemed *almost* able to share the pursuits of others, and yet you have been shut out. You must remember, my dearest, this trial, which seems almost like ingratitude, for the mercy you have received is known and entered into by Jesus. He knows how pleasant knowledge is, and how delightful music is, and how cheerful the family circle is. He can pity the child whom he so tenderly loves, from whom he has seen it necessary to withdraw all these indulgences. He has choice ones in store: no pleasure is withdrawn but there is a greater one waiting to be bestowed.

"Your affectionate sister,

"E. S. B."

The General Thanksgiving of 1847, for the very bountiful harvest, was the occasion of the following:—

"Oct. 16, 1847.

"PRECIOUS SISTER:—What can I say to cheer you on the thanksgiving-day? Oh, many things! I know, amidst the mingled cloud of incense that will rise before the throne of God, that which ascends from my dear sister's chamber of suffering will not be wanting. She will have to praise him for strength, which has carried her through even the darkest days; for heavenly love and earthly love that sweeten every sorrow; and the bright hope beyond, the rest, the joy, the glory, to come. She will be able to praise him, too, for the mercies of others, and to share in the joys of harvest; and if some thoughts of murmuring creep in, that she cannot join in the songs of the sanctuary, she will remember one who said, 'My soul longeth, yea, even *fainteth*, for the courts of the Lord.' His longings are now all satisfied: he has dwelt in those courts for ages of bliss, and all who share his longings shall join him there and be satisfied with him forever.

"Your affectionate

"E. S. B."

"MY OWN DARLING FAN:—I am doubly bound to send you a note to-day, since I have

robbed you of M——, and your own C—— is away. From how many different places special prayer will be rising for *you* to-morrow, as well as the general prayer of the whole Church for all those who are in sorrow or any adversity. You must remember, darling, that, in the threatening state of your poor head, your plain duty, the only sacrifice God requires, is passive submission. Others may be called to the exercise of active worship; they must stir up themselves. *You* are called to quiet, patient suffering; you must compose yourself to rest quietly in Jesus's arms. Would you thank your maid, if you felt tired and had asked her to keep the room quiet that you might sleep, if she puzzled herself to find conversation to amuse you? Oh, my Fan, if we poor blind creatures, who often do not know what we want, make obedience the test of acceptable service, and sometimes count it better obediently to do nothing than officiously to do much, can we wonder that our heavenly Father sometimes bids us *be still?*

"Should temptation try and drive you from the resting-place, remember, its very object is to break your peace. Endure it, but do not distract yourself with it. Look up to

Jesus to repel it: a bewildered brain is no match for Satan. You must fight, by looking up from your resting-place to your Guardian.

"Your loving sister, E. S. B."

The improvement to which some of the previous letters referred was of short duration. In November, Elizabeth tries to cheer her under increased illness:—

"MY DEAREST FAN:—I write uncertain how much you can bear to-morrow; but I know you can bear these precious words:—'Casting *all* your care upon him, for he careth for you.' 'No,' the devil says,—'not all. Cast your bodily pain, your sickness, all your little privations, on him, but not my temptations. You must keep the burden of them; you can't cast a burden like that on Christ.' Yes, Satan! *because* they are thy temptations, I can cast them on Him who has conquered thee. I rest on him. I can cling when I cannot fight; I can trust when I cannot pray. Christ gives me *peace*, and I must rest.

"God bless thee, my own darling, and carry thee through this illness.

"Thy loving sister, E. S. B."

"My dearest Sister:—In the hope you may be well enough for a word, I sit down to write you my usual Sunday letter. My dearest, God's people are all one body; in one sense, what is done by one is done by all. To-morrow you will, perhaps, be too ill to pray or praise, or sensibly to love and trust. It will seem a worthless, blank Sunday. Think then of what is going on elsewhere. Here a sinner is saved, and angels rejoice over his soul; there a tempted Christian is set free, and, oh, what a song of joy he raises! There an anthem of praise arises from an assembled congregation, and God delights in the hymns of his people; and there some long-tried believer bursts the chains of earth and tries the first notes of his heavenly harp. Darling sister, you belong to this glorious rejoicing church; its prayers ascend for you from ten thousand churches, and joy soon will be *your* portion too,—joy for yourself, and reflected from every one rejoicing around you.

"Your loving sister,

"E. S. B."

CHAPTER VI.

THE BEGINNING OF 1848—HER BROTHER'S ORDINATION AND MARRIAGE—HER PERSONAL LOSS IN THESE CHANGES—THE ATTRACTIONS OF HER SICK-ROOM—THE FLEXIBLE WILL—AGAIN NEAR HOME—LETTERS—THE FOUNTAIN AND THE DEWDROP.

THUS 1847 closed, and the new year brought little change in the sick-room. The current of family life at Watton was at this time running deep and strong. The ordination of the only son and brother, his first gospel message from his father's pulpit, and his marriage, were absorbing family interests, which enlisted Fanny's deepest sympathy, but perhaps gave a keener edge to the trial of being shut up in the confinement of her chamber from any personal participation. Elizabeth's New Year's greeting was as follows:—

"A happy new year to my own sweet sister! Does this sound strange, when it promises to be a year of continued pain and trial? yet,

dearest, He who has carried his children through the flames of martyrdom as through a bed of roses, can make your sick-room a happy place. I know you feel, 'If only his presence was with me, it would be a happy place; but he so often hides his face, and then, when earthly comforts are taken away and heavenly comforts withdrawn, how can there be happiness?' In faith, my dear one, we call that a *happy* enterprise which is sure of a successful issue, though it be painfully toilsome in its progress. The faithfulness of God is *pledged* that you shall have a happy issue: so take courage through the toilsome way; you will see the needs-be at the end, and own with humble gratitude that this winding way was still the shortest and safest road home. . . .

"Your loving sister,

"E. S. B."

The most affectionate sisterly interest in her brother's happy marriage, and his entrance on his first parochial charge in Norfolk, could not make Fanny insensible to the heavy loss she would personally sustain in his removal from home. No trained nurse

could better fulfil the duties of the sick-room; and many a gathering cloud of depression was dispersed by the breezy joyousness of his tone and manner. His heart was drawn out very tenderly by the sufferings he witnessed and was so powerless to relieve. He penned for her the following lines on a day which had been spent in a constant succession of her distressing attacks. He had taken up his post at her bedside to watch by her during the evening, and, to his inexpressible relief, saw that the unconscious moanings were yielding to the craving of the weary frame for rest.

HE GIVETH HIS BELOVED SLEEP.

I.

"Oh, tread lightly: she is weary;
She hath suffer'd all day through,
And the night is somewhat dreary
If she wake and suffer too.
Silently the stars are keeping
Their sweet vigils o'er her,
And she dreams not in her sleeping
That to-morrow is before her.

II.

"Break it not, that spell of slumber,
Waveless, beautiful as heaven,
'Mid the sharp gusts without number,
And the clouds of tempest driven.

Weep not, sister,—sister, cheer thee;
Yet she will not hear thee weep.
She is weary, very weary:
Only let her sleep!

III.

"I could fancy, gazing on her,
She had pass'd her night of sighs,
And that heaven's own light upon her
Waits, to greet her opening eyes.
Silence on each word of sorrow,
On a thought that would repine;
For there shall be such a morrow,
And for thee, sweet sister mine.

IV.

"Ah! I know it, that reposing:—
'Tis her Father bade it come,
Emblem, when life's day is closing,
Of the deep repose of home.
Storms, the joy of calm redoubling,
In the mansions of the blest,
Where the wicked cease from troubling
And the weary are at rest."

The following was received from Elizabeth a few days after her brother's marriage:—

"March 4, 1848.

"MY DEAREST FANNY:—I am so glad to hear your sufferings are a little relieved by the leeches. My own darling, your heavenly Father has seen fit to lay an unusually heavy

burden on you, therefore you must not be surprised if your steps are slow and weary; but, remember, he judges not as man judges. One breath of praise amidst your sorrow may be a more acceptable offering in his sight than the light-hearted songs of joy and praise which arise from hearts to whom life brings only sunshine. When you can look up and say, 'It is my Father, though he smites me,' the filial confidence is more precious in the sight of God than the trust which has never been roughly shaken by sorrow. Hold on, dearest: you are safe on the Rock of Ages; though you sometimes feel as if you had lost your footing, the rock is underneath you, and nothing can sweep you off from it.

"Your own loving sister,

"E. S. B."

"March 18.

"MY OWN DEAR FAN:—This Sunday I must be your petitioner: I want you to ask a birthday blessing for your little niece. You know, my dearest, a parent has especial pleasure in granting the wishes of a suffering child: may it not be thus with our heavenly Father? May he not in his tender love pay

special heed to the prayers which rise from the bed of suffering? If so, dearest, we may, unknown to ourselves, owe many mercies to our dear Fan's prayers, and the life which she is sometimes tempted to think useless may be a rich blessing to many.

"I should like you to see your little pet when she is told to say 'Fanny:' she can manage the 'F' now, and she makes such a business of arranging her tiny mouth, and then 'Fa' comes out with such emphasis and self-satisfaction.

"Your own affectionate

"E. S. B."

Her vivid delight in all things beautiful opened to her many sources of enjoyment; and it was a special pleasure to those who loved her, to surround her with whatever might gratify it. She had favourite flower-glasses, which, by the kindness of dear friends in the neighbourhood, were even in winter kept supplied with choice flowers. She called them her "little preachers;" and many a Sunday morning her attention was happily engaged in listening to their message of love, without the exercise of mind it was equally needful and

difficult to avoid. Her room was adorned with several statuettes; for symmetry of form had a special charm for her. Of these, the favourite was "Eve at the Fountain;" and it was often one of the last requests at night that her "Eve" might be so placed as to catch the first rosy glow of morning. A prism hung suspended from her window, to entice gay sunbeams to spell out upon her ceiling the mystic alphabet of light; an Eolian harp made melody for her of the summer breezes; a pair of little birds from Java added their quota of amusement; the walls of her room were papered with a bowery green; her mother's correct eye for colour was conspicuous in the drapery which shaded her water-bed: altogether, the little room had the aspect of a place loved and cared for, and merited the praise Elizabeth bestowed on it in the following letter:—

"April 1, 1848.

"DARLING SISTER:—I can just fancy your pretty bright room these lovely days, with birds, flowers, sunshine, and the brilliant colours of the prism. These are pleasant things, and make a room delightful; but God sees something brighter and more beautiful in

your chamber: he sees his own dear child saying faintly, tremblingly, but yet sincerely, 'Thy will be done;' he sees many a hidden victory over murmuring thoughts,—perhaps an irritable answer, in which overwrought nerves would fain find relief, restrained, lest it should wound another; he sees Satan again and again foiled by strength made perfect in the greatest weakness. The eyes of God rest on the sick-room, and he rejoices in his love. Darling, when the sweet flowers are brought to your bed, will you not think of that sweeter fragrance you can present to your heavenly Father in a meek, submissive spirit? You have a great work to do in your weakness; you can show forth God's glory in a way we cannot, for you can show how no trial is too heavy for him to support his children through. The heavier the burden, the greater the glory that accrues to God in your bearing it.

* * * * * *

"Your affectionate sister,

"E. S. B."

This month was marked by another of those apparent changes of divine purpose by which her heavenly Father cultivated in his child

what Mme. Guyon so aptly terms a *flexible* will, a step beyond even cheerful submission to any known and contemplated dealing of his providence. There was for a few days every appearance of rapid sinking: to quote from a record of the time, "To-day (April 17) she has sunk rapidly; even the attacks have disappeared; and she is like a child, quiet and dozing in a state of extreme exhaustion. Mr. D—— warns us of the probable approach of convulsions, from which there will be no power to rally, and this long and weary illness seems thus about to close suddenly and unexpectedly. Her beloved father gently intimated to her the probability that death was near, by repeating, as he bent over her, "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil." "Does papa, then, think I am so near home?" she whispered. It is one thing to long for death under the pressure of aggravated suffering; it is quite another to listen with calmness to the measured tread of his approaching footsteps. To our beloved one, the feeling of solemnity was unmingled with alarm; she knew in whom she had believed. For her sake we too were made willing to give her up. One of her sisters writes, "God has

so far weaned us by her bitter suffering as to make us rejoice for her; our hearts have thrilled to the accounts of European revolutions, wars and rumours of wars, and if God shall see fit to take one so tenderly affectionate from the scene of coming trouble, shall we wonder,—can we murmur,—even though the rest of the pilgrimage must be passed without her?"

He who has the keys of death did not, however, at this time open to her the portal, of which she had gained the threshold: from hour to hour death was averted, and the delay gave to a constitution which must at first have been remarkably vigorous, time to rally. The attacks again appeared, and ere long the uniform course of suffering was re-established, with little to mark the sudden arrest it had experienced. Elizabeth's Easter letter, written a week afterwards, briefly alludes to it:—

"Is it an Easter Day with thee, dear one, or is it dark within, as if the close, suffocating walls of the sepulchre still pressed around, and there was no way of escape open? Is it a feeling of disappointment that the gate of heaven seemed so near, and then closed again? Take

courage: you are joined with Christ; you are now sharing his death, his tomb, and it is dreary. Will he leave you there? No, dear one: as surely as he burst it himself on the joyful resurrection-morn, so surely shall you be set free. This Easter Day is a pledge of it to your soul. Had Satan had his way, Christ would never have burst the tomb; he tried his utmost with his watch and seal, but, oh, how weak they proved when the time came for the King of Glory to burst forth! and how weak all his chains, his doubts, his suggestions, his temptations, will be, when the Lord's day of deliverance for my beloved sister comes!

"Your own sister,

"E. S. B."

The following bears the same allusion:—

"April 29, 1848.

"MY DEAREST FAN:—I will give you this text to think of to-morrow: 'He hath led me and brought me into darkness, and not into light.' You thought, my dearest, a fortnight ago, that you were to enter into light, but now a dark path opens again, and you see no end of it: still, cannot you take up Jeremiah's words

and say, '*He* hath led me'? If so, you may implicitly follow his leading: a child will allow his father to lead him into the dark; he dares not go alone; but when he has hold of his father's hand, though he shrinks from the surrounding gloom, he will take courage, and not allow himself to fear. Perhaps, darling, you are sometimes disposed to take the strain in which the prophet continues, and say, 'He hath hedged me about, that I cannot *get out;* he hath made my chain *heavy;* also when I cry and shout, *he shutteth out my prayer:*' if so, look a little further, and you will find it written, '*The Lord will not cast off forever;* but though he cause grief, yet will he have compassion according to the multitude of his mercies.' One whose prayer—whose *earnest* prayer—seemed shut out, could yet say, 'The Lord will not cast off forever.'

"Your own loving sister,

"E. S. B."

It was always one of the beloved sufferer's great anxieties lest those around should take too favourable a view of the mental darkness and distress, which were nevertheless accurately proportioned to the frequency of her attacks,

and the degree of pressure occasioned by them on the brain. "Surely it is sin," she would say, "which brings this terror; surely my Father is hiding his countenance because of the horrid thoughts which come into my mind." "Very well, darling," her sister would say, quietly: "since you are so very wicked to-day, we will put on some leeches;" and then the dear anxious face would brighten, as she remembered how often the clouds had thus been dispersed, and how little such a remedy could avail if the seat of the mischief were indeed the heart or the will. This often-recurring anxiety naturally made her very sensitive to the discouragement of apparently unanswered prayer. A letter like the following was therefore well calculated to cheer and sustain her faith:—

"May 26, 1848.

"MY OWN DARLING FAN:—Thank God for in some measure restoring you again, for, if it be a lengthened path of suffering, we must thank him for the love that sweetens it. I have been reading such an encouraging sermon on delayed answers to prayer. One anecdote I must tell you. A Christian parent had the

grief of seeing all his children living afar from God. He prayed earnestly for their conversion: there was no answer. His own life drew near its close. He prayed that his death might be the means of accomplishing what his life had failed to do. His children were all present; but, instead of the peace which for their sakes he so desired, darkness and conflict were his lot in his dying hour. That darkness was the means of awakening all his children to a sense of their own danger. 'If our pious father,' said they, 'dies thus, what will become of us?' Some of them have followed him to glory; others are still living in the fear of God.

"Here, darling, was a prayer as unanswered, to all appearance, as our's, and spiritual darkness was one element of the denial: yet how triumphant was the final answer! Shall we not also trust, and not be afraid?

"Your loving sister,

"E. S. B."

Another fruitful source of self-accusation was the inability to pursue any connected train of thought on her little daily portion of Scripture. Elizabeth met and answered the difficulty in the following parable:—

THE FOUNTAIN AND THE DEWDROP.

How bright is the hour of early dawn,—when the soul, casting off the burden of the past day's weariness and sorrow, springs forward to enjoy the new life, to meet the new hopes of another morning! Such had been often Jessie's thoughts as she arose with a light and buoyant heart to devote this first hour to her God; but now the feverish, broken slumbers of sickness brought no refreshment to her weary frame; her Bible lay open on the bed, and her eye followed the well-known lines, but her feeble thoughts strove vainly to grasp their meaning. At length, wearied with the effort, she closed the volume, and, withdrawing the curtain which shaded her casement-window, gazed listlessly on the scene before her. A little cottage girl tripped lightly past, her pitcher in her hand, to seek water at the neighbouring spring. "Happy child," thought Jessie, "how often have I seen thee thus pass my window, when I too could bear my pitcher to a better fountain, and drink water with joy out of the wells of salvation, and now they seem quite closed to my thirsty spirit! But perhaps I have done wrong thus easily to yield to a sense of weari-

ness which might have been overcome.' With these words, she once more opened her Bible. In vain! The more she strove to fix her thoughts, the more distracted they became; her mind seemed as one dead blank, or as a mirror broken into a thousand pieces, which could reflect no image distinctly; and, with a feeling of deep dejection, she closed her eyes, and laid her aching head upon the pillow.

She had not remained long thus disconsolate, when a little bird, perching on the tree near her window, commenced his matin song. At first it was but a broken chirping, and Jessie heeded it not; but by degrees its melody grew more full and clear, and breathed such love and joy that, as she listened to the strain, the burden on her heart grew light. Another and another sweet songster replied from the neighbouring wood, till the whole air was full of their joyous melody.

"What a burst of wild glee from the songsters of the wood!" cried Jessie: "surely it is to greet the morning sun!" "Ellen," she said, turning to her attendant, "raise me up, and open my casement, that I too may enjoy his first bright beams." It was a glorious scene that met her view. The light clouds

that floated in the sky were tinged, not with the gorgeous hues of evening, but with the delicate tints, tender as childhood, so peculiar to the early dawn. The hills were bathed in rosy light, while wreaths of silvery mist floated over the valley. The sunlight glanced brightly on the rippling waves of the bay, and on the oars of the fishermen now hasting to their morning toil. In Jessie's garden each bower and shrub glittered with a thousand dewdrops, and the breeze was perfumed with the fragrance of the flowers. She gazed in silent rapture on the scene, and, yielding passively to its influences, drank in joy at every sense. On the wings of joy her heaven-tuned spirit soon mounted in praise to her Father's throne; his love was breathed in all the loveliness around her, and her soul rested in sweet, child-like communion on him.

Ellen's voice now broke the chain of her thoughts, as the affectionate girl reached her a beautiful bunch of roses. "See, dear mistress," said she, "I told you I should soon be able to pluck them from your window, and they are, as you love to see them, all glistening with the morning dew." "They are indeed fresh

and beautiful," cried Jessie, "and seem as if they had been drinking in the precious gift of heaven." "Yes," answered Ellen, who, brought up with her young mistress, had learned to sympathize in her thoughts and feelings, "I often think how good God is to the lovely flowers: they do but stand still and look up to heaven, and the soft dew falls freshly on their glowing leaves."

"Dear Ellen," said Jessie, "have you divined my thoughts? You do not know how sad I felt this morning, when, striving vainly to read my Bible, I saw a child pass by to seek water at the fountain. Now I see how needless was my grief: if I can no longer seek water at the fountain, I can at least, as the little flowers, look up to heaven, and my Father will send on me the soft dews of his grace. He has done so this morning, when I was unable to raise my thoughts to him: he spoke to me in the sweet song of the birds and the glistening sunshine. I will trust, and not be afraid. He shall work for me and in me. Thou, blessed Saviour, hast borne the heat and burden of the day. I, thy weary child, have but to rest in sweet peace upon thy bosom."

Thoughts thus expressed, and conveying the deliberate opinion of one in whose judgment she felt she might safely confide, went far to relieve the needless scruples of a tender conscience.

CHAPTER VII.

DIVISION OF TIME—WORK FOR GOD—FOR THE POOR—FOR FRIENDS—EARLY WAKING HOURS—PREPARATION FOR THE COMMUNION—SPIRITUAL TEMPTATION—HILDA, OR THE THWARTED WISH.

It was now more than two years since Fanny had returned from Torquay. The *severity* of her illness continued; but the *excitement* of it, to her and to her family, was yielding to the more chastened and far more sad anticipation of a lengthened course of suffering. During this two years she had experienced, and they had witnessed, crises in her illness which seemed as if they could be charged with no other commission than to "bring her to the haven where she would be:" yet time after time she rallied, and, closely as the last attack had resembled the approach of death, no permanent effects remained to warrant the hope that she would soon be at rest. "I think it is the healthy who die," she said, "and the sick who live on." It could not be a *welcome* thought; but, as the indications of her Father's will

became more manifest, they were accepted, not in the sullen conviction that to resist were unavailing, but in the satisfied assurance that He who had given his Son for her could not but love her, and was worthy of her unwavering trust in every dark and mysterious winding of her homeward path.

As the conviction gained strength that she might yet for a lengthened period be led about in the wilderness within sight of home, the healthy moral tone of her mind was manifested in the desire that something of order and method should regulate her invalid and suffering life. She seemed bankrupt in bodily strength and mental vigour: yet there were some few fragments she would gather up and use in her Saviour's service. Her time,—could she not make something of that? A short portion only of the twenty-four hours was taken up in sleep, and various little handicrafts, requiring neither strength nor thought, had already been devised to cheer the tedium of those hours in the long day which were not absolutely preoccupied with suffering. How would it be if she chose some favourite society, and worked for that, sending the proceeds from time to time as she was able to dispose

of what she made? The thought was like a gleam of sunshine. "I should like the London City Mission," she said: "the money would so often find its way to people who suffer as much as I do, without my comforts." This was her "*work for God;*" and the first and best hours of those days in which she did not suffer too much to work at all, were given to it. Any of our readers who possess the records of the City Mission and care to turn to the numbers from 1848 to 1852 will find now and then remittances from "Miss F. B., the proceeds of her work during hours of suffering:" it sometimes amounted to several pounds in the year. But there were other and nearer objects of interest: her sisters would return from their village-work with tales of an old woman crippled with rheumatism, and babies whose tender feet were purpled with cold, knowing how readily their darling sufferer would promise to knit a shawl for the one, and socks for the others. Her "*work for the poor*" had its regular season, and she too could sometimes speak of time flying too fast, when the hour came to an end before the self-imposed labour of love was accomplished. *Working for her family and friends* also was made a

separate interest, and had its own allotted time. Our heart and eyes fill with the memory of all the little, ingenious devices of affection to supply the fancied or real wants of those she loved: after any absence from home, the long, fond kiss with which she greeted their return was always followed by the mysterious uncovering of some pretty piece of workmanship for their acceptance, which had perhaps only been accomplished in time by her adding what she called "an indulgence-hour" to her usual season of "working for friends."

It seemed worth while to be thus particular in describing her occupations, because with her the experiment of planning out her day answered so well, that the writer is disposed to think much of the monotony attendant upon chronic illness might be averted, or at least relieved, of the occupations of which the invalid *is* capable, be they what they may, are undertaken and varied at stated and regular times. If one occupation is changed for another, because the hour is at an end which the invalid had planned to devote to it, she is far more likely to take it up with zest the next day than if she had indulged herself by continuing it until weariness compelled her to

desist. Thank God! there are few who cannot bring more variety to bear on their daily employments than was permitted to Fanny, few who cannot have the enjoyment of half an hour's reading, few to whom the occupation of the fingers is the only remaining interest on which they can venture.

The following was intended to meet the trial of the early waking hours to which we have alluded:—

"DARLING FAN:—Some few thoughts about restless nights:—

"1st. Jesus knew nights without rest, and one, we know, of intensest suffering.

"2d. It has been frequently the lot of God's children. 'Wearisome nights are appointed unto me: all the night long make I my bed to swim and water my couch with tears.'

"3d. The eye of the great Father, fixed nightly on all his children, rests most tenderly on the couch of the restless sufferer.

"4th. Restlessness, such anguish on earth, will be joy in heaven. 'They rest not day nor night.'

"In haste, your own loving

"E. S. B."

"DARLING FAN:—What thoughts will a Sabbath morning bring to my dear sister? Perhaps in the lonely hours of the night, God may have spoken as he does sometimes to her heart, and she may have had sweet communion with heaven; perhaps the enemy may have been permitted to harass her, and then there has been a struggle with hell, for which her strength has seemed unequal. Oh, what a seeming difference there is between these two states! Yet, precious sister, in either *you* are the same,—a child of God, equally, perhaps more, dear to him when struggling than when occasionally he permits you to rejoice. The joy indeed is his own direct gift; but not one hour of the conflict comes without his permission,—a permission dictated by infinite love. 'I am the Lord, I change not: therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed.'

"Your loving

"E. S. B."

In the following Elizabeth leads her to the attitude of *expectation*, which can never be disappointed when humbly and perseveringly directed to the Lord of the Sabbath:—

"DARLING FAN:—This text came home to me for you,—God grant it may be suitable!—'All thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children.' You are so shut out from human teaching, you should lay fast hold of a text like this, and plead it with God. *Expect some teaching every Sunday;* not a full Sabbath,—your poor head is far, far too weak for that,—but just some one word of instruction sent home from God. Observe, too, it is a teaching of peace. Dwell not on temptations, not on the enemy's cavils, not on your sins, but on the story of peace, and in that, God's teaching, the teaching of peace, comes home to the soul.

"Perhaps we have all been too much in the habit of hoping you might be *carried through* the Sunday, and not (as we might) that you might have some Sabbath blessing on the day: yet, darling, if it seems sometimes refused, do not despond. Remember, God's teaching is sometimes one of *denial*,—'No,' 'no,' to every request, and a Father's wisdom dictating the 'no.' All will be plain soon. God bless you, dear one!

"Your affectionate

"E. S. B."

Occasionally, with considerable abridgment even of the shortened form of "Communion for the Sick," her beloved father administered to her the Lord's Supper. In days of comparative health she had been accustomed to give considerable time to preparation for this blessed ordinance, in accordance with the precept, "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup:" now she could only cast herself in her helplessness at the feet of a mighty Saviour, and take refuge in the thought that "the preparation of the heart in man cometh from the Lord." Elizabeth encourages her in this simple trust. "If you receive the sacrament," she says, "do not distress yourself in preparation: take it in simple faith, as a means of grace in which Christ will work in your soul; and if your poor brain seems to have prevented your having any enjoyment in it, remember that submission to God's will in relinquishing *just that spiritual privilege* may be the grace he designed to work in you."

We should perhaps have concluded that as this weary one, under the heavy pressure of bodily suffering, bent her steps heavenward, the enemy would be especially restrained from

any attempt to harass or hinder her; but He whose ways are not as our's, permitted that she should be sorely tried with suggestions of Satan's malice, which from her inmost soul she hated. Sometimes she could unburden her mind on this subject; and after an occasion of this kind Elizabeth writes:—

"DEAREST FAN:—My thoughts have been a good deal on the conversation we had together when I was at Watton; and, as the doctor must consult the physician, I ventured so far as to ask my dear T. whether he thought we might unconditionally pray that these trying assaults of the enemy might be restrained. He seemed to feel that you *would* be delivered, but that, as these heaviest of all trials are also purifying, we must trust to our heavenly Father's wisdom as to the time and manner of deliverance. Then he prayed for you, my Fan, so sweetly! I wish I could remember the exact words, but it was just for the rest you want.

"One thing, my own darling, I am anxious to bring before you: you have not yielded to a temptation when you have been too weak actively to resist it; you have not yielded,

because you have passively, against your will, received an impression. The agitation of striving to repel vehemently these distressing thoughts is one great harm the enemy does you. *Perfect peace* is your heritage; you will enjoy it: faint not, though the way is rough. God bless you, my own dear one.

"Your affectionate sister,

"E. S. B."

We see from the next letters that such periods of spiritual distress were usually connected with some aggravation of her symptoms:—

"My own sweet Sister:—I fear this Sabbath dawns cloudily in the sick-room. I did not know, till I received mamma's letter, how very ill you had been. . .

"One word for to-day: this is no time for arguments with the great enemy. A treacherous servant insults the beloved child of the house with doubts if his father loves him; the child won't give up his father's company to stop to answer him: no, he runs to his father's arms. Safe folded there, may he not look with exulting confidence on the

traitor who deceived him? *You are the child;* Satan tries to deceive you; answer him by loving trust; in time he will fly. Much, very much love.

"Your own affectionate

"E. S. B."

"My darling Fan:—To-morrow is likely to be but a suffering day to you. Oh, it is a very hard trial of faith,—but Jesus knows how hard; and when with struggling submission you succeed in saying, though with many tears and many a wish that that will might be otherwise, 'Thy will be done,' he joys over you with love; faith has gained a victory, and every victory of faith is one step homewards. You should try and dwell much on the intimate knowledge Jesus has of the nature of your complaint; he knows exactly where the pressure is on the brain, how that pressure affects the whole nervous system, how far the nerves affect the mind, so as to make you not responsible for what you cannot avoid, and how far they weaken the mind, so as to afford him a fresh reason for urging the loving excuse, 'The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.'

"T. sends his best love, and desires me to say how grieved he is to hear of your suffering so much. I hope the postman will not contrive to delay this note. I meant you to have two last Sunday, because C. was away, and I hear he brought you none till Monday.

"Your own loving sister,

"E. S. B."

Sometimes one or two lines in pencil, written by herself when her head would bear it, supplied Elizabeth with the key-note of her feelings, and suggested the subject of the Sunday letter:—

"My darling Fan:—I have not forgotten your *note*, though I have waited till Sunday to answer it. 'You are very weary.' Darling, is not this just the difficulty and temptation attending on a prolonged heavy trial? You know, even in earthly knowledge, an experience of difficulties is not a proof that we are making no progress, but often just the contrary. A person knowing nothing of music, and seeing a performer's fingers fly over the instrument, might call it easy work, but when

he begins to learn, he finds out many unknown difficulties. He proceeds farther; now he can accomplish what at first seemed impossible; but more difficult tasks are set before him, his *labour* increases with his *power*. In some respects it is so with you: a lengthened is an accumulated trial; patience and submission may be growing, while the added strain upon them may prevent the growth from being sensible. You will see hereafter the path by which you have been led.

"Your affectionate

"E. S. B."

June 10 was Elizabeth's wedding-day; and on its anniversary this year she writes:—

"DARLING FAN:—Have any of you remembered this is our wedding-day? The thought of it has led my mind back through the past three years, and I could not but feel how dark had been the cloud resting on my Fan's mysterious path; but, my dearest, when we think what eternity in the blissful presence of God is, and that this little life is the only preparation-time for it, can we wonder if God sees

some sharp blows needful to mould the vessels destined to special honour?

"Baby is now one of my lesson-books; I read a word in it for you as I was playing with her the other day. She had hid her flowers between my hands, and when she tried to open them I kept them closed, not because I wished to deprive her of her treasures, but for the pleasure of trying her little strength, and, when I yielded to it, her laugh was so merry! I thought, it is thus with my Fan: your flowers are hid in God's hand; you have asked for them; he will not open it; but not because he means to deprive you of them, but to try his child's strength. How joyful the shout of triumph will be when he yields to it! My baby found only the broken pieces of stock she had hidden; but you will find your broken flowerets transformed into a wreath of heavenly glory.

"Your loving sister,

"E. S. B."

The following little parable was probably written for her at this time, as it embodies much the same thought:—

HILDA; OR, THE THWARTED WISH.

The young Hilda had long been confined to a couch of wearisome pain and sickness; but health now began once more to glow in her cheek, and, on one of the first warm mornings of spring, her light step bounded again over the moss-grown walks of her favourite wood. A clear rivulet flowed through the wood, and its little waves danced in the laughing sunshine. Hilda watched with delight the sparkling fish, now glancing through the sunny waters, now hiding themselves amidst the cool, green river-weeds. A light breeze passed over the wood, and played amidst the tender green leaves of spring; and the little birds flew gayly from bough to bough, and carolled their sweet wild songs. "Happy, happy creatures!" cried Hilda; "how sweet are the joys of freedom! and I too now am free!" And she bounded along with a lighter, firmer step, as though she would shake off the heavy load which had pressed on her young life.

At this moment a man entered the wood, leading by the hand a lovely boy. The child

felt all the bright glad power of spring, and the merry peals of his laughter mingled with the song of the birds. The flowers of the thicket soon caught his eye, and he would fain have twined for himself a garland in the wood; but his father held his hand, nor would suffer him to leave him for a moment.

Then Hilda's heart was grieved. "The fishes of the stream," said she, "and the little birds among the branches, follow their own wild will, and rejoice in blessed freedom; and this sweet child, so lovelier far than they, walks sad and downcast, his buoyant joy all dashed: methinks I hear him weep."

Her eye followed the child and his father through the winding valley. The wild flowers were soon forgotten, but the path grew rough and stony. In an instant the child clung to his father's arm, and Hilda saw him safe folded to his bosom. They approached the moorland; but the child felt not its keen wind, for his father's cloak was wrapped around him, and he was borne safely and gently over every dangerous pass.

Hilda now no more regretted for him the sports of the happy woodland creatures. "There is joy," she cried, "in wild freedom,

but a deeper, holier joy in confiding, clinging love; and this is the picture of the child." "I too," thought she, "am a child;" and a tear of self-reproach fell from her eye, as she thought how often she had repulsed the unseen Hand that guided her. "How often when my Father has held me back," said she, "have I begged him to leave me alone! Alone! O Father," she exclaimed, "forgive thy wayward child, and hearken not to her foolish prayer: let her rather feel the sternest grasp of thy earnest, faithful love." Then peace was breathed into her soul, and in its inmost depths sounded the sweet words of promise, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

If Hilda's step were less buoyant on her return, her heart was more full of peace. Her prayer was heard, the hour of sorrow was near, and the grasp of love grew stern, yet was she not left alone; and in the conscious presence of chastening love she found a tearful joy, for which no freedom could have made amends.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE FELLOW-SUFFERER—NURSERY LETTERS—CHILDREN IN A SICK-ROOM—THE FOUNDATIONS OF FAITH TESTED—A WORD FROM HER FATHER—LETTERS.

In reading new books, it was always a pleasure to Elizabeth to gather out any choice or appropriate thought for her darling sister's comfort:—

"July 1, 1848.

"My own dear Fan:—You will be so rich in friends to-morrow that you will want your absent ones less; but Bessie cannot forget that one of her Sunday privileges is a word by her dear one's bedside in the morning. I have been reading the Memoirs of Mrs. Wilson: it made me think of you. She says, from her childhood, amidst every blessing and almost boundless indulgence, she was subject to fits of the strangest depression,—sometimes passing days and nights in tears. She goes on to say, speaking of her feelings after her conversion, 'That which through all her life she longed

for, as an impossible solace,—that some one could dwell within her, and see what she herself could never understand,—that solace, that impossibility, has been attained. Jesus, before whom these irrational tears are shed,—Jesus, with whom these morbid sensibilities are shared,—*He does know.* He knows how much is sin, how much is misery,—how much to be repented of, and how much only to be borne; and he can sympathize alike with all, for he, and he only, pities sin as much as he pities sorrow, and speaks peace to the contrite as well as to the afflicted. Under the deep sense of sin and helplessness and self-abhorrence, that now accompanies every return of this mental anguish, and adds to its poignancy, she need not tell him, and he need not tell her, the source and nature and culpability of her feelings. She can say to him, "Lord, thou knowest." And he can answer, "My grace is sufficient for thee." It is sufficient for Jonah in the great deep, whither his own wilfulness had brought him; and for Daniel in the den, to which his enemies consigned him; and for her who, in such deep and untold anguish as made her cry aloud to God for release from

the body of this death, *knows*, and *feels*, and *proves* he is sufficient.'

"These words, from a fellow-sufferer, will come more home, dearest, to your heart, than a theory from one not knowing the intensity of that deepest anguish,—a bewildered, wounded spirit. Much love from T.

"Your own affectionate sister,

"E. S. B."

As in water face answereth to face, so the heart of man to his friend. Fanny read and re-read the experience of her sister in sorrow, and, like "Christian," her heart was lightened at hearing the sound of a fellow-pilgrim's voice in the dark valley she was treading. Elizabeth was encouraged to proceed with the plan:—

"July 8, 1848.

"MY DARLING SISTER:—I was so successful with my extract last Sunday, I shall try another to-day: it is at least a reminiscence of some of my pleasantest Sunday afternoons, when my Fan used to taste with me the enjoyment of the favourite bits of the books we were reading, as we sat together with our feet on the fender, or paced up and down the

library. My little bit of comfort to-day shall be drawn, not only from what Christ does *for* his helpless one, but from what, to her great astonishment, he may be doing *by* her. 'The blessings of sanctified affliction are not confined to the sufferer alone. From the east and from the west, from the north and from the south, shall arise witnesses to this truth. Many a mourner may learn with glad surprise that the balm which soothed her sorrow refreshed a fellow-sufferer in some remote corner of the earth. The sun exhales the dew-drop, and carries it in a cloud to water some fainting, far-distant flower. The tear shed in silence by one suffering Christian is refracted in the bow of promise that cheers another.'

"I know you will be pleased to hear baby is quite well again,—merry and saucy,—toddling about the rooms up-stairs as busily as if all the affairs in the house rested on her. To-day I was singing to her 'Oh, say, pretty bee,' and she looked up in my face and said, 'Memie.'* She remembered who used to sing it, and no doubt wished the nice clear voice back again. She said 'Fa' this morn-

* The pet name of one of her aunts.

ing when her little hands were put together for her prayers. And when nurse asked her what she would do for auntie Fa, she began to blow.* I am afraid your pretty willow-plat is sowing seeds of vanity in her infant mind, —she is so charmed with her new bonnet. You should have seen how the poor garden-shade was tossed down this morning, because she wanted to have it. Much, much love to thee, my own darling. My heart feels more than usually with thee.

"Love to all the dear ones.

"Your own affectionate sister,

"E. S. B."

Does any reader think that "baby" is occupying a place of unnecessary prominence in a collection of thoughts and correspondence designed for the sick-room? We plead, in the first place, that we are *compiling* these letters, not *composing* them, and cannot find it in our hearts to dismember them of all those little home-scenes which discover to us the fond mother in her newly-awakened joy, watching the development of her first-born child, a win-

* The little one had seen the dear sufferer's hot head bathed and fanned.

some thing of a year and a half old. In the second place, though we do not pretend to say that Elizabeth philosophized on the subject, or that she *could have done otherwise* than talk and write about "baby," we yet maintain that it was a wisely-chosen theme in her correspondence with her suffering sister. We appeal to those who are familiar with the sick-room. Has not the presence of a little child been sometimes to you like a breeze in summer? The very unconsciousness it exhibits of your suffering takes you out of yourselves. Such unconsciousness in your attendants or your older relatives would be painfully like want of sympathy. Yet while you are grateful for the looks of tender condolence called forth in them by the sight of your suffering, insensibly such looks depress you: it is, as it were, your own pain beheld through a multiplying glass. But a little child comes in, with its sunny smile and fairy-bounding step, to bring its offering of wild flowers, or to climb your bed and cover you with sweet kisses; and though the merry voice may not be kept within sick-room modulations, and the little visitor must soon be dismissed, your heart is lightened; the little one has beguiled you of

your sorrow, and its own light-hearted gayety is not a whit diminished. There *are* children —yes, and baby-children, too—who seem to have a special vocation in the sick-room; who would rather be with you in darkness and solitude than without you amid their toys and companions; who steal to your chamber when you are missed from the family circle, and covet nothing more than to nestle in your arms, or to sit upon your pillow, laying little cool, soft hands upon your burning forehead, and prattling loving words in hushed and gentle tones. Oh, these are God-sent angels of comfort! But, without including such as these, we do feel pity for the invalid who cannot sometimes be refreshed by the presence of a little child; and we shall venture to insert yet more of Elizabeth's nursery-letters.

"July 22, 1848.

"DARLING FAN:—I do so hope my 'little messenger' may help to pass the hours of to-morrow; and if so, I shall say she begins life by being useful. It is such a pleasure to me to send her to you. I have sent a packet of picture-cards, and, if you should be well enough, she will be delighted to be told what

they are, for they are new this morning. Now, will this little bright one bring any sad thoughts to my sweet sister? Will it seem to her as if life began in joy and ended in sorrow? Dearest, God never works downwards, but always upwards: *we begin* well, and then spoil our work as we go on. *God's* work is always progressing. You have not had your joy, but only some faint earnests of it in the joyousness of your infancy: the reality is to come, and is to be measured by the depth of present sorrow, multiplied by those precious words,—'far more exceeding.'

"Love to all. May God bring us all together on Monday!

"Your own affectionate

"E. S. BIRKS."

The next is headed, "I fear this may be a *tiring* note to read: so *shut it up* if your head is bad. I may, perhaps, be with you next Sunday." We can answer for it, that, however "bad" the head might be, the "tiring note" was read.

"Aug. 5, 1848.

"MY DEAREST FAN:—It was a disappoint-

ment to me not to be able to realize my little plan of sending you my 'doll,'—the only doll you will now condescend to be amused with, though I would get the best waxen arms and legs London could furnish, if they would answer the purpose. But 'no,' you say;—

> 'I would I were the little trifler once again
> That could be pleased so lightly.'

Do you, dearest, wish it? Can you not discern in the growth of mind which has already made childhood's joys seem so very, very small, and childhood's sorrows so light, a pledge of eternal progress, an earnest that you are on an upward path, and when you are a little higher still, even present sorrows will seem light? In reading 'Evans's Spirit of Holiness,' a thought for you came across my mind; and though I am anxious not to turn your mind from Christ's work *for* you, because that stands out plain and clear, and Satan cannot deny it, while the work *in* our hearts is often clouded, half white, half black, so that we can look at the black side and be disheartened, still I must tell you what I was thinking. Evans speaks of the misery heaven would be to an unconverted man: he would find nothing

there to meet his wishes. I thought, 'What would my Fanny find there?' Why, the very thing she longs for,—a *certainty* that God is,—that he loves her; peace; rest in him; freedom from temptation. Just what she most wants. May she not, then, hope that God is preparing her for that land to which the instincts of her soul turn? Shall she listen to the enemy, who tells her she has no part or lot in the home of her heart? Think on this, my precious one, and see if something within does not answer to it.

"Your own loving sister,

"E. S. B."

"Aug. 18, 1848.

"My darling Fanny:—I know some sad thoughts will come into your dear head to-morrow. You will be thinking, 'Only one day more, and my C—— goes,—goes for three weeks. If I am worse,—if any thing goes wrong, and she is not with me,—what shall I do?' Now, dearest, I want to bring one thought to your mind: God arranges every little part of our trial. He saw it needful for you not only to have this long faith-exercising illness, but to have sometimes to part with a sister to whom you cling with a dependence

almost to yourself unaccountable. Just that combination of circumstances is necessary to reveal God to your soul. If you clung less fondly to a sister, if she could be always with you, there would not be the same rebound of dependence and confidence in Jesus. When we see God's hand in any little passing trouble, the pain is not gone, but the bitterness is; for there is positively something allied to pleasure in feeling his hand near us, even though it hold a rod. I must send you a short note, for time has gone on wings to-day.

"Your own loving sister,

"E. S. B."

"Aug. 26, 1848.

"MY DARLING FAN:—I have been reading some beautiful thoughts of Cecil's, in a book just published of notes of his sermons, which seem to me just suited to you. They are on Christ sending Ananias to Saul, when he had been three days blind, and too agitated to eat or drink. I will copy them; they seem to me just what you want. 'Christ *knows all* our wants, and the *way* to meet them. Remember, he breaketh not the bruised reed. Perhaps you, like St. Paul, are in darkness, and no

Ananias appears to succour or comfort you. It is because the time is not yet come. But the time is come when you may pray. Ananias did not come before Saul prayed; for it was said to him of Saul, "Behold, he prayeth." Prayer comes before good things, and it is a token of them. Do not despair. Christ is able and willing to perform the same miracles still, and the same are continually taking place. Depend upon it, the man that prays shall prosper for time and for eternity. You cannot be too much impressed with *how little* a man can do for *himself*. We depend upon God for the hour, the day, for every thing: all is in the hand of Christ. A spiritual sigh is a blessed token from God.' I shall be thankful, darling, if these fragments are a word in season to-morrow. I know Sabbath manna often falls in my dear sister's sick-room, sent by Him who knows she is shut out from the rich storehouse of the sanctuary.

"I should like to send your little niece in to you for half an hour: she grows so imitative, we must take good care what she hears and sees. This morning, to nurse's great amusement, she put the wooden hands of her doll together to make it say its prayers, and then

began repeating what words she could remember of her own little prayer. Not being disposed for her mid-day sleep, she trotted about the room, 'Sleep at night, mamma; sleep at night.' There is something so endearing in the 'please, please, please, mamma,' with which she coaxes me to sit by her on a footstool and build her a tower. When a naughty fit comes on, she seems to know the best way is to hide her head on the floor till she has recovered her equanimity: so we leave her there now to cry herself good. She has yet to learn that 'self-praise is no recommendation,' for if she accomplishes any little feat she will cry out, 'Good baby!' with great satisfaction. I feel this little bright one exposes me to such constant danger of resting in a world so full of life and love as a happy child is encircled with. It is a constant, lawful, and yet most seducing object of interest. Some gratitude, I hope, she awakens in our hearts,—but, oh, not half the holy watchful feelings that she ought. Give my best love to the dear ones at home.

"Your own affectionate sister,

"E. S. B."

Fanny appears at this time to have been a

good deal harassed with mental conflict; and it was a form of her trial in which Elizabeth had been taught, by painful experience, how to sympathize and help:—

"Sept. 11, 1848.

"My darling Sister:—Here is the paper you wished for. Do not attempt to read it at once, or, indeed, at all, unless you feel it may relieve an anxious doubt. I am persuaded that prayer and trust, rather than arguing with temptation, should be the prevailing position of your mind. 'In *returning* and *rest* ye shall be saved; in quietness and *confidence* shall be your strength.' Still, it is sometimes a refreshment to look at the strength of our foundation; and if this little paper, which gives but a fraction of what might be given, is any comfort, I shall be so glad!

"Your own loving

"E. S. B."

The enclosure was as follows:—

"I was taught from childhood to believe the Bible was the book of God. In the thought was happiness,—If the Bible is true, my every want is satisfied. But the torturing

thought arises, 'Is the Bible the word of God?' 'I have been taught so,' does not still the anxious doubt, 'Can it be proved?'

"If it is, He who wrote it will guide my inquiries. 'Lord, lead me into all truth. Thou wilt not deceive. Teach my willing soul.'

"ARGUMENTS.—1st. Those who wrote the Bible must have best known whether they discovered its truths by their own wisdom, or whether they were conscious of receiving inspiration from a Spirit superior to their own. They declare these to be the words of God: why should I disbelieve them? They are clearly not bad men, who would wilfully have deceived *me*, nor foolish men, who would have been easily *self*-deceived. If I can reasonably believe the testimony of the *holiest*, the *wisest*, the *calmest* men, concerning what happened to *themselves*, I may believe the writers of Scripture when they say they are inspired of God.

"I compare them with the philosophers of Greece and Rome. I find the Hebrew sages, with the calm majesty and assurance of truth, firmly declaring a simple and consistent system, in which the character of God is revealed, the work of creation narrated, man's immortality asserted, his future destiny explained, the

mysteries of sin and redemption set forth. I find the Greeks and Romans perplexed, inconsistent, and in their highest efforts rising only to a consciousness of ignorance, and a longing for revelation. Yet these were the wisest men of nations greater than the Hebrews, who have in other respects left greater traces of mental power. If the Bible is not inspired, I have the strange anomaly of a simple pastoral people producing for the space of fifteen hundred years a series of sages, who in regular order developed one vast system of wonderful sublimity, in *every* part superior to the *highest* achievements of *every* other nation. This is much more out of the usual course of probability, than that He who made the world should reveal himself to his own creatures.

"So much for the writers of the Bible. But now, thirdly: If God were to reveal himself, how should I expect he would do so? He is almighty. He would probably, by the exercise of superhuman power, awaken the attention of men, that they might see it was indeed God who spoke. This he did in the miracles; every part of creation was proved subject to the Being who sent these messages. The sun and moon stood still—the waves retired—

light was turned into darkness—the air was filled with pestilence—hail and fire fell—wild beasts were tamed—fishes came at the word of command—ravens brought food untouched, —locusts and caterpillars became the hosts of the Lord—diseases vanished—even death was conquered! Again: God *rules* the world. I can speak easily, though not confidently, about my own intentions; but of future events, quite beyond my control, I can say nothing. If the Bible is God's book, it will probably contain something of his future purposes, which will be told with the same ease with which I explain my future plans to a friend,—but without uncertainty, as God's plans cannot be thwarted. This description, I find, answers exactly to the prophecies of Scripture. Again: God is good and holy. I should expect a revelation from him to be most eminently distinguished from all human writings by its holiness, and to have an extraordinary effect in making men holy and pure. I find this fully realized in the Bible.

"I find in man's mind certain dim notions, which he cannot shake off, of God, duty, immortality. These dim gleams of light make him earnestly long for a revelation. When

it comes, I should not expect it to contradict, but to embrace them all, and to explain them. This, too, I find the Bible does.

"If the Bible is God's book, I should expect to find God's power exercised to preserve it from destruction and to spread its truth; for it does not flatter man's fancies, so as to make him naturally willing to receive it. This I find has been the case with the Bible. I see on the Bible the stamp of God. I will not, therefore, perplex myself with devising *possible* doubts, any more than, if I were to receive a loving letter from my father, I would fancy it possible that some rogue had counterfeited his name. I see his signature; it is enough for me: a *possibility* of doubt shall never perplex me, while I have *good* and *reasonable* grounds of faith.

"I am not surprised at these doubts: they are the natural results of my exposure to the attacks of one who is a fiend in malice, an archangel in wisdom. I will not suffer them to distract me, or to turn me from the enjoyment of my Saviour's love. 'Get thee behind me, Satan; for thou art an offence unto me.' Lord, confound thou mine enemy, by revealing

unto me the light of thine own countenance; that, seeing thee, I may doubt no more."

We are tempted to put in a bright word from her father which we find among the Sunday letters at this time:—

"LIVERPOOL, Oct. 2, 1848.

"MY BELOVED FANNY:—I could not write for Sunday, and now I am busy as a bee; but every now and then my suffering child comes up in my mind, and I force my business to stand still to tell her I love her, and pray for her, and thank God for her, while away from her. She is to be the means of blessing all her family, by leading them all to see in her more of God's ways of grace and goodness, even by the darkest hours of his dealings with his children. The death (John xii. 24, 25) is for the 'much fruit.' Let us more realize this.

"Your own father,

"EDWARD BICKERSTETH."

"Oct. 7, 1848.

"MY PRECIOUS FAN:—I fear, from the accounts this morning, you will be more than usually weak to-morrow. I give you this

thought:—Jesus is always the same; wher on earth, he was specially tender to the weak He pronounces special judgments on any who should offend one of his *little* ones. When Pharisees would have imposed too heavy burdens on them, he would not hear of new wine put into old bottles, but would measure their duties exactly to their strength. When any cavilled at them, he answered for them himself. Dearest, leave him to answer Satan, the arch-caviller, for you. He was so meek, it was noted of him, he would not break a bruised reed; so patient, that though he often cried, in wonder, 'How is it ye do not understand?' he never ceased teaching and guiding them. This is *your* Beloved, this is *your* Friend, my dear one. Can you not almost fancy you hear him saying to you, as he did to Peter, 'O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?' 'Wherefore? am I not strong?—wherefore? am I not wise?—wherefore? am I not unspeakably tender and good? Surely you may trust me! If trust be possible anywhere, it may safely be reposed in me.'

"In three weeks, my dear one, I hope we shall meet again. Papa's letter has decided

T. to go to London for the jubilee: so we shall come (D.V.) that week.

"Your loving sister,

"E. S. B."

"Oct. 14, 1848.

"MY DARLING SISTER:—This changeful day seems almost a picture of your sick-room. Now it is a little brighter,—the blue sky gleams out, and even the clouds catch a bright glow, which makes them beautiful! But again a dark storm-cloud comes over: all is gloomy,—the rain-drops fall; and when the next gleam comes, we say, 'It will not be fine long; another shower is coming.' Now, the sun will soon set, and then there will be a long, dark night, and only moonbeams to struggle with the gathering clouds. Not so with my dear one's sick-room: the sunset hour is coming; each flitting gleam and storm, endless as their alternation seems, brings it nearer; and then no dark night, no struggling moonbeams, no storms, no cloudy mist,—but all at once a burst of Heaven's own day! All earth's love and loveliness far surpassed; all the rest earth could not give, secured forever; no more flittings, no more fears. Try, my sweet sister,

and raise your weary heart to that bright place; you do not deserve it; but, for all that, Jesus has bought it for you.

"Your own affectionate

"E. S. B."

"MY DARLING FAN:—I have just been writing part of a paper for my Magazine, on the love of Jesus, as manifested in his conversations with his disciples. It is a blessed subject; there is such a depth of thoughtful tenderness. I will try and give you one thought to dwell on. At the Last Supper, when Jesus was about to plunge into the depths of abasement,—to become a worm, and no man,—the disciples were contending which of them should be greatest. How perverse! He had already settled that dispute by the touching image of the little child set in the midst. How inopportune at such a moment! How does Jesus meet it? By no harsh rebuke: by the touching remonstrance, "I am among you as he that serveth." But this is not all. In their perverse dispute he realizes the germ of faith that prized above all things a high place in his kingdom; and he meets this with the promise, 'I appoint unto you a kingdom,

as my Father hath appointed unto me.' Apply this history, dearest sister: when others tell you, to cheer you, God has given you grace to be patient, your sad heart says, 'Oh, no: I seem patient; but he sees how inwardly I repine.' This is true and humbling, as you direct your attention to his omniscience. But think how he discerned the faith amidst the perversity of his disciples; how he encouraged it and delighted in it. He will not be less ready than your earthly friends to discern in like manner the workings of his own grace in you, —the effort which represses the rising murmur, the felt irritation. The *sin* he bears with, forgives, in due time will purge away; the *grace* he smiles upon, and, feeble as it may be, it shall not be forgotten in his sight.

"Your affectionate sister,

"E. S. B."

CHAPTER IX.

UNREASONABLE FEARS—UNION FOR PRAYER—TRIAL OF FAITH—REAL BLESSING GAINED—LETTERS—CLOSE OF 1848—TEDIOUS SUFFERING—THE MEASURE OF GOD'S GIFTS DRAWN FROM HIMSELF.

UNREASONABLE fears were at this time cruel enemies to Fanny's peace. Her dependence on one sister, who took the chief part in nursing her, was ready to become so exclusive, that she would dread painfully the hours of family meals or exercise, when she was left to the sole attendance of her nurse. Her own judgment condemned these fears, and saw the true remedy. "If I could only feel the same comfort in the presence of Jesus that I do in *your* being with me," she said to this sister, "all this fear would be gone; for you know *He never* leaves me." We are tempted to anticipate here a memory of the last week of her life. A near approach to the brink of the river had enabled her to catch many a passing glimpse of the glories of her home. "You will soon see papa, Fan,"

said one of her sisters. A ray of joy kindled in her beautiful eye as she answered, "Yes, that will be very nice; but" (and the dear, wasted features glittered with animation) "it will be so much more blessed to see Jesus; I shall be so safe with him; so happy, that, nice as it will be to see papa, I hardly think of it in comparison." Truly, her wish was granted,—the wish uttered in darkness and gloom nearly four years previously,—and Jesus did become all her salvation and all her desire.

But to return to the autumn of 1848; the actual suffering and the nervous apprehension, the evil felt and the evil feared, seemed a burden almost too heavy for the beloved sufferer, and it was agreed among several families of intimate friends to meet at the throne of grace on an appointed day, and plead with their Father and her's for some mitigation of this heavy trial.* With reference to this union for prayer, Elizabeth writes, in November:—

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* The following was drawn up by her dear father, as expressing the blessings Fanny most desired to obtain:—

"Miss F. Bickersteth having for several years been in a suffering state, which has been latterly much increased,

"My dearest Fanny:—Before this note reaches you, I trust many prayers will have ascended to God for you. My dearest, we are sure of a blessing; God's faithfulness is pledged to that; but we must be content to trust Infinite Wisdom and Infinite Love to choose the best blessing for us. I trust God will give *sensible* relief; but, if he does not, I shall be sure we are not sent empty away; but faith, submission, or some other grace, will be given. T. was reading Luke iv. to me. I was struck with the expression, 'Jesus was led of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.' Had the Saviour prayed unconditionally against even Satanic

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her relatives are anxious to get the prayers of her friends in her behalf, on these particulars:—

"'That God may be glorified in her affliction.

"'That she and her relatives may say from the heart, The will of the Lord be done.

"'That none of his designs for her and their spiritual good in the affliction may be hindered through their unbelief and want of conformity to his will.

"'That if it be his will, relief may be given to her from her present suffering, in the way it shall please him.

"'That if it be his will to prolong the affliction, it may manifestly be full of spiritual blessings to her and others.'"

temptation, he would have prayed against the leading of the Spirit. May God, dearest, teach our large party not only to pray, but to pray aright! I feel we are so empty,—so dependent on him.

"I see great comfort for you in two verses of Ps. cxviii.: 'Thou hast thrust sore at me that I might fall; but the Lord was my help.'—'The Lord has chastened me sore; but he has not given me over unto death.' You see, dear, two sore things sometimes come together; the sore thrusts of a spiteful enemy, who wishes us no good, but only our fall, and the sore chastening of God. Each of these sore things has a restraint upon it: when the enemy thrusts sore, the Lord, stronger than he, is our help, and makes us in the end more than conquerors. When the Lord chastens, there is none stronger than he; but his love is stronger than his wrath towards his redeemed. The chastisement is all measured: it may be sore, but it always stops short at the limit his people can bear. They are not given over unto death.

Your very affectionate

"E. S. B."

This union for prayer was for a time an added demand upon faith; yet, in the end, the words were verified which come in such beautiful apposition:* "Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, *and thy footsteps are not known. Thou leddest thy people like a flock*, by the hand of Moses and Aaron." The nervous terror from which she had so ardently hoped to be delivered rather increased than abated. Her father felt it his duty to be firm in requiring that there should be no absentees from the family circle at meal-hours, and that the sister on whom his suffering child was most dependent should, from time to time, exchange the duties of the sick-room for the mental refreshment of visiting among friends. For two years and a half Fanny had been now confined to her bed; it was her own idea at this time that gradual and persevering effort might enable her to regain some power of moving from room to room, and thus affording the most effectual relief to the terror which at times haunted her seclusion. By medical consent, the experiment was cautiously tried, and, though her

* Psalm lxxvii. 19, 20.

extreme feebleness, and the frequent recurrence of the attacks in her head, allowed of only partial and very gradual success, she could from this time spend part of the day in an easy-chair; in little more than a year, she was able to bear occasionally being carried down-stairs into the library, and, in the following summer, to enjoy the cool evening hour on a sofa under the trees.

The apparent failure in one object of the prayer-union on her behalf was thus the means of restoring to her in a measure some long-forgotten pleasures, and of enabling her to share the sacred privilege of spending many hours beside her beloved father's sick and dying bed.

In the following letters we find Elizabeth's ready sympathy quickened by some personal experience of illness:—

"Nov. 18, 1848.

"MY OWN DARLING SISTER:—Though I am almost forbidden the use of my legs, fingers happily can work on the sofa, and prevent a break in our usual Sabbath intercourse. This thought came pleasantly into my mind when I was poorly, and I thought perhaps it might cheer you. How the loving heart of Jesus

must rejoice in the mitigations he can allow us in times of trial, knowing, as he does, they were all purchased by his own unmitigated suffering: the love which surrounds us in sickness, purchased by the bitter scorn which surrounded his cross; the hope which cheers us, purchased by his drinking the cup of wrath to the *very dregs*; the sense of mercy in all, purchased by his having borne the cursed cross. How he joys over us with love, and gives each dearly-purchased boon with such deep tenderness! We must not distrust him, but take the bitter and the sweet from his hands with the same childlike confidence. May you, my own sweet sister, in your no common trial, be enabled to do this.

"Your affectionate

"E. S. B."

"Dec. 2, 1848.

"My dearest Fanny:—It will be a very long time before we must hope to meet: so it is pleasant to be able to keep up the link of correspondence with my beloved sister. I will give you a thought for to-morrow, which present circumstances have brought vividly before me. God is our *own* Father. That

means, he has a love to us independent of our goodness, which has its foundation in the depths of a Father's heart. When we are perverse, a Father's thoughts turn instantly to the means for our cure and restoration to holiness. But to *cast off* the child, that is never the alternative present to the Father's mind. Then, too, what a delicate consideration of the child's peculiar circumstances! How many a loving excuse, because it is very young, it is very feeble! Perhaps it is sick; it has been exposed to a stronger temptation than usual. Nothing is forgotten when it is a father that is weighing the conduct of his child. A stranger's child is loved if it is good and fascinating; but if it is naughty and trying, principle alone overcomes an impatient wish to be free from the burden. But with one's own child how different it is! We are God's own children. Let us rest with a child's confidence on a Father's heart.

"Your own loving sister,

"E. S. B."

"Dec. 9, 1848.

"DARLING FAN:—I am doubly bound, having stolen *your husband* (a *sobriquet* mischievously

suggested by Fanny's clinging dependence on her sister-nurse, and the ardent affection with which it was returned) to replace my truant one, to write to you to-day. I have chosen this text for you:—'The Lord knoweth *how* to deliver the godly out of temptation.' Lay the emphasis on the *how*, and you will find the words full of comfort. There are many ways of delivering; quick ways and slow ways; plain ways, and strange mysterious ways, in which the commencement of the deliverance is apparent forsaking. Now, the Lord knows which of these to choose. We are often tempted to think he has chosen amiss, because we only see half the temptation; and therefore think we could devise a much quicker way out of it. He sees the whole danger of our souls. He means the deliverance to be perfect. He means fully to prepare his chosen vessels for their glory, and he knows *how* to do it. We must let him work. The *how* may as yet be uncertain and unknown to us; but the 'Lord knoweth,' is a certainty, and the deliverance is a certainty; and on these two we must rest.

"You do not know how much dear C. and I had to talk over. I hope a little change

may do her good. Baby is delighted, and shouts about the house after her. I have not heard a word yet from T. Are you not glad *your* husband is so good about writing to *you?* A note yesterday was thought essential. Tell my darling mother I feel sensibly stronger, and do not keep much on the sofa now.

"Your own affectionate

"E. S. B."

The year seems to have closed with a period of unusual suffering. Elizabeth writes, on the 19th of December:—

"DEAREST FAN:—I am very doubtful whether you will be able to read a note to-morrow; but I must send you a few lines. We shall pray especially for you, that, whatever suffering may be your portion on the morrow, the felt presence of Jesus may be with you. I used to wonder at your long trial. Now I see that God is teaching us all by it how strong his arm is to support his suffering children. You often wished you could *do* something for Jesus. He is answering your wish. You *are doing* now in suffering; and perhaps when you, my precious one,

have been many years in your heavenly rest, some of us shall be deriving strength from the remembrance of these days of sorrow. Much love to you from T., who constantly remembers you, both in family and private prayer.

"Your affectionate sister,

"E. S. B."

"MY DEAREST FAN:—The approach of Christmas and New Year may, perhaps, lead your mind forward; and a future, presenting the prospect of a succession of sick-bed trials, may seem almost overwhelming. I would therefore try to-day and remind you of the sympathy of Christ with *anticipated* trial. He knew, when he began his course, for how many years he was to be a man of sorrows. He spares us this. We know not how soon the light of heaven may break on the world's darkness. But he also anticipated—as you so often do—hours of special anguish. Then his soul was troubled, and he cried (oh, how human is the sound!) 'Father, save me from this hour.' Does he not sympathize with all the shrinking my sweet sister feels from the trying morning hour when she feels so lonely in her wakefulness? He was alone in his

greatest need. But how did he strengthen his soul to bear the dreaded trial? By dwelling on the glory it would bring to God. 'Father, glorify thy name.' And God is also glorified, dearest, more than you now see, in your long trial. Love to all at home, and very much to your dear self.

"From your affectionate sister,

"E. S. B."

We are conscious, in comparing the closing months of 1848 with 1847, that while the sick-room had established its own place in the family life at Watton, and while its beloved occupant was gaining an ever-increasing hold on the love and sympathy of those who witnessed her daily and patient suffering, her illness was not, as formerly, the central fact, absorbing all other claims. Duties to the parish—those overflowings of ministerial responsibility, which form so rich a heritage in the clergyman's family, and which had been very much laid aside while the danger of losing a beloved sister appeared imminent—were this winter earnestly resumed. Fanny was well content that it should be so; and, being always ready to share in the parochial

interests brought home by her sisters, she found, in the enlarged scope for her sympathies, an ample reward for the personal sacrifice of enjoying less of their society. But the little details of the sick-room, amidst the variety of other occupations, are at this time so scantily noticed that Elizabeth's weekly letters are almost our only chronicle of the many fluctuations in its monotonous history, or of the process of spiritual refining and discipline by which God was training his own beloved child for her place in his kingdom. The following is written for Epiphany :—

"Jan. 6, 1849.

"My dearest Fan:—I think this day may afford especial comfort to all who are seeking Jesus amidst doubt and darkness, since it reminds us how he was found of them which sought *not* for him. Much more, then, will he, in due season, reveal himself to his own longing, waiting children. How inconsistent should we think a man who, turning away the poor suppliant from his own door, should go out into highways and hedges, to compel outcasts to come in! This is not the inconsistent part that could be acted by the God of infinite wis-

dom. Therefore, every sermon preached, every message sent to the impenitent sinner, has a note of tenfold goodness for the longing child. You are hungry, my own dear one; yet it is often with that faint hunger of the soul which seems to unfit it for the heavenly feast. But fear not: you still come in the class to whom the promise is made, 'He *filleth* the hungry with *good* things.' I give you those two underlined words to think of to-morrow. Pain is not good; a confused brain is not good; utter weakness is not good. These, then, are not your final portion. The promise is reserved. The good things are not come; but they are sure to come,—sure as a Father's promise can make them.

"Your own affectionate sister,

"E. S. B."

"KELSHALL, Jan. 10.

"MY DARLING FAN:—As it is uncertain whether I shall be able to write to you on Sunday, I must send you a few words of a beautiful exposition dear T. gave us at prayers yesterday. It was on Jesus's walking on the sea to his disciples in the storm. He was alone on the land, while they seemed exposed

to all the dangers of the storm,—an emblem of Jesus at his Father's right hand while his people are buffeting with the trials of earth. They were *toiling hard* in rowing; for the wind was contrary; a picture of Christ's tried, afflicted people. He seemed unmindful of them: it was the *fourth* watch before he came to them. When he did come, he made as though he would have passed by; but it was only to attract their attention to himself. Think, my dear one, of Jesus making as though he would pass by. Has it not often been your experience when you seemed to want him most?—for, indeed, you were toiling hard in rowing:—then he seemed passing by regardless; but it was not so. In due time he will say, 'It is I: be not afraid.' And immediately your little bark will be at its haven.

"Mamma is well, and seems so happy with her little grandchild on her knee. It is a pleasure to us to watch the pair,—the little one looking up so sweetly to her as she sings and talks. I do not think there is any danger of your child forgetting you. Your picture is a great help; it gets famously kissed and petted as poor 'auntie in bed.' Give much love from me to the dear ones at home; I know

they think of us, and pray for us at this time. . . .

"Your affectionate sister,

"E. S. B."

"Grandmamma's" visit to Kelshall on this occasion was to welcome the arrival of the first little grandson into the family. Fanny's Sunday word of comfort from her sister suffered but a very short interruption. On the day week of her little nephew's birth, we find the following pencilled lines from Elizabeth, in a feeble and scarcely legible hand:—

"Jan. 20.

"MY DARLING FAN:—A pencil line I must write thee, if it is from my bed, at the risk of dearest mother's shaking her prudent head. My own darling, the recollections of this day week, and the weary long time that twenty-four hours seemed to me, enable me to realize how heavy your trial is, and how great the grace of God which sustains his feeble child under it. When you doubt his nearness, ask yourself if you are really standing alone, supported by your own inherent strength: if not, whose arm but his is underneath you?

"My boy promises, thank God, to be a strong hearty fellow: he was a great contrast at first to the sweet little sister who fixed her blue eyes in such wondering curiosity upon him; but he improves daily. I must not write more in my darkened room.

"Your own affectionate

"E. S. B."

"Feb. 10, 1849.

"My dearest Fan:—There is one text I have been thinking of this week:—'Delight thyself in the Lord, and he shall give thee the desires of thy heart.' This is often what he seems to deny, and while we own he is wise and just, the *desires of our heart* still remain, and we long to have them granted. Have you not felt this, darling, when you have been thwarted in *little wishes?* It is a comfort to know our heavenly Father is not regardless of the desires of our heart. As far as there is one lawful element in them, they shall be granted more abundantly than we can conceive; and if they be selfish and self-willed, they shall be taken from us, so that when the Lord has perfected that which con-

cerns us, no single desire shall remain unsatisfied.

"Your own affectionate sister,

"E. S. B."

"Feb. 24, 1849.

"DARLING FAN:—Another week has passed, and sees my precious sister still on the same bed, in the same room, bearing the same suffering, and, perhaps, growing very weary of its unbroken monotonous course. What thought shall comfort? Will this? Jesus suffered *long* for us. The bitter but short agonies of Calvary would scarcely meet the case of his people under *tedious* suffering, but the long life of the Man of Sorrows will. In one respect it seems to me, dear, you are specially honoured in conformity to the sufferings of Jesus, and that is in the humiliation of your illness. It is so mortifying to feel intellectual powers, capability of enjoying deep thoughts, bright fancies, lovely music, and yet to have a brain so disorganized that all must be relinquished, and your best days spent in handicraft a machine could almost perform. Your soul is like a princess imprisoned in a hovel. Must not Jesus have felt this more keenly still,

when the unwonted burden of suffering feeble flesh weighed on the mighty aspirations of his godlike spirit? Does he not express the burden when he says, 'I am a worm, and no man'? so humbling and burdensome was his mortal frame. Tell him, dear one, your sorrow; he will whisper, 'I have borne it too, I know its bitterness: it shall not last one moment longer than my love sees needful, and thy bowed-down spirit shall be set free, for an eternity of dignity and glory.'

"Only two more letters, darling, before, please God, we meet.

"Your affectionate sister,

"E. S. B."

"MY DEAREST FAN:—This thought came into my mind when reading my Bible: it may perhaps cheer you. The measure of God's gifts is always drawn from himself, not from us. If we are to be strengthened, it is according to his glorious power; if we are to be glorified, it is with such glory as shall glorify him and cause him to be admired; it is the good pleasure of *his* goodness that is to be fulfilled in us, not our own limited desires of good. When we feel very empty and very needy, what a

mercy it is to see on how large a scale blessing and help is to come, so that we must exhaust the Almighty himself before we can be left without resource!

"Your little niece has been standing chattering by me, while I have been writing, that she will go to 'Wattie' soon, and see dear 'auntie in bed.' I shall be so pleased when auntie sees her little brother: he grows such a nice boy, I am sure you will be pleased with him. My precious sister, you are shut out from much, but not from the sweetness of love; and if you are spared, there will be fresh streams of love from these tiny ones; fresh, happy feelings of love in your own dear heart towards them I know there are already.

"Your affectionate sister, E. S. B."

"DARLING FAN:—I send you the following extract:—'To show us the sun at midnight, and convince us of love when we feel the rod, and to give us the comfortable sense of grace while we have the uncomfortable sense of the greatness of our sin; to give us the joyful hopes of glory in a troubled, melancholy, dejected state,—all this is a work that requireth the special help of the Almighty, and exceeds

the strength of feeble worms. Let God give us never such full discoveries of his tenderest love and our own sincerity, as if a voice from heaven had witnessed it to us, we are questioning all, if once we seem to *feel* the contrary, and are perplexed in the tumult of our thoughts and passions and bewildered and lost in the errors of our own disturbed minds. And thus unthankfully we deny God the praise and acknowledgment of his mercies, longer than we are tasting them or they are still before us. All that he has done for us is as nothing, as long as our dark distempered souls are in a condition unfit for the apprehension of mercy, and usually when a diseased or afflicted body both draw the mind into a too great participation of the affliction.'

"Has not your old friend Richard Baxter taken a peep at your heart?—do you not often have such one-sided peeps within, seeing all the confusion, and none of God's work of grace that is surely going on amidst all? It will, perhaps, cheer you to see how exactly others have felt the same.

"I will not write much; for we hope, please God, to be with you early in the day.

"Your own affectionate E. S. B."

CHAPTER X.

VISITS FROM KELSHALL—SECRET BURDENS—DEATH OF A BELOVED AUNT—FANNY'S SHARE IN PAROCHIAL WORK—DR. M'NEILE'S VISIT.

It was always a bright time for darling F—— when her practised ear caught the sound of Kelshall carriage-wheels. She well knew her room would be the first visited when the little confusion of arrival had subsided; and after the babies had been caressed and dismissed, it was such deep repose to lay her weary aching head on the shoulder of her mother-sister, and tell some of the hidden conflicts, which to the very last she could confide more readily to her than to any one else. Our *Bessie!*—it was her familiar household name—all who knew her felt how natural it was to be unreserved with her; there was a quiet depth of affection in her soft blue eye, which invited confidence; and, genuinely happy herself, as her own beaming expression proclaimed her to be, there was nevertheless a singular power of understanding the sorrows of those she loved,

and identifying herself with them. In Fanny's worst trial, the skeptical doubts, which seemed to sweep with withering force over a mind half paralyzed* with disease, Elizabeth could bring experience as well as sympathy to bear for her comfort. We gather from the next letter, written after her return to Kelshall, that such had been the nature of her intercourse with Fanny at this time:—

"March 31, 1849.

"My own darling Sister:—Amidst all the changes of *our* life, there is something so unvarying in the continued suffering of your sick-room. It is, indeed, a sore exercise of faith and patience to submit; but do not be discouraged. The perfect work of patience is

* We must not be supposed from this expression to imply that her disease exhibited any symptoms of mental aberration, on the one hand, or of imbecility, on the other. By her own desire, the cause of her suffering was ascertained after death, when the brain itself was found in a natural condition, but from the inner surface of the skull grew several sharp points of bone, which, by pressure on the delicate substance of the brain, kept up a constant irritation, occasioned her very frequent attacks of distress and unconsciousness, and hindered the *exercise* of those mental powers which to the last she fully retained in *possession*.

included in the precious promise, 'The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me.' *Faith*, too, dearest, will be perfected. I believe it often strikes deeper roots in the soul while the storms of skeptical doubt are sweeping over it. The poor tree is so shaken, it seems the roots are snapped: but it does not fall; and when the storm has passed, it is found to stand firmer than ever. Have you not, in moments of darkness, felt a comfort in the actual certainty of things visible,—your sister's love, your C——'s protecting care? This certainty is your future portion: when you see Jesus face to face, what devil, could he even find access to heaven, would dare to suggest a doubt about him? With an eternity of *certainty* (oh, that blessed, soul-sustaining word, *certainty!*) in prospect, bear up, my own darling, under the passing cloud of doubt: it is a *bitter* trial, but it will pass away.

"Your own loving sister,

"E. S. B."

"April 14, 1849.

"MY DEAREST FAN:—One thing struck me as just suiting you in the Easter portions: it was the mistake of Mary, when Jesus himself

stood behind her. She supposed it was the gardener, who had borne her beloved Saviour's body away from her longing sight. I thought of you. 'In how many a temptation,' I said, 'does she only see an enemy ready to tear the Saviour from her grasp! yet if her eyes were opened, in that very temptation she would see Jesus himself, his wisdom, his love, choosing that strange, unlikely means to ripen her for glory.' By-and-by, He who spake that one word, 'Mary,' and broke every spell which separated his loving follower from him, will speak to you; and while in joyful ecstasy of love you grasp his feet, where will be the room for doubt?

"Try, my precious sister, to keep your mind fixed on him when any* fresh medical assistance is talked of. The doubtful, but just possible, chance of relief, is sometimes more trying to the spirit than the certainty of continued suffering. But, whatever else is doubtful, it is sure

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* Perhaps this refers to the administration of chloroform, which was advised in the idea of giving a temporary interval of ease: it seriously aggravated her suffering, and the experiment was never repeated. It was always difficult for her, and for us, not to *hope too much* from any new suggestion.

that Jesus will, when the appointed time comes, be the *curing* physician, and now he is the alleviating and sustaining one: he cannot and will not fail you. T—— sends his fond love.

"Your own sister,

"E. S. B."

Few things made a greater demand on Fanny's submission than when she saw the gates of the kingdom opened to receive those who had been her fellow-travellers in the path of trial. "When will my turn come?" was the involuntary question. This month a beloved aunt was taken home, who had glorified her Saviour through twenty years of bodily suffering and infirmity: her sun set in unclouded beauty. With reference to it, Elizabeth writes:—

"April 21, 1849.

"DARLING FAN:—I know your thoughts will, to-morrow, be much with our happy, glorified aunt, and you will contrast her bright Sabbath with your weary, heavy one; but, my precious sister, let the thoughts be only thoughts of comfort. One weary pilgrim has reached the goal; she reaps now the fruits of all her passing trials, which lasted so many

years; and the sight of her reward should cheer those who are yet left behind.

"I will give you this text:—'Blessed is he that *considereth* the poor.' What our God commands us to do, he does himself. You are the *poor* one,—unusually poor,—without strength even to think; and still poorer, because you can remember how once you enjoyed mental pleasures. God is *considering* you. He comes to no hasty decision for want of considering your suffering state; he removes no indulgence he would have left had he *considered* your weakness; he speaks, and, what is more, he allows Satan to speak no harsh, no taunting word, because he has forgotten how easily a wounded spirit may be pained. Every step, every mercy, every trial, every indulgence, is considered in love and wisdom. Take this one word, *considereth*, home to your heart today.

"Your own loving
"E. S. B."

"May 19, 1849.

"DEAR FAN:—When I was thinking what I could choose for you this afternoon, this thought passed through my mind:—'Does my dear

sister dwell enough on the close connection of temptation and trial in Scripture? She counts her bodily ailments a *trial;* and, though they are sore to bear, she knows they are sent in love. But when temptation from Satan comes, she no longer sees her heavenly Father trying her, but only the malicious agent of his wise and loving purpose. Her conscience is troubled with a sense of guilt; she transfers Satan's action to herself, and fear and terror take the place of confidence and submission in her soul.' I do believe, dearest, that Satan's great object in many harassing temptations is just to occupy our minds, that we may have no time or strength left to enjoy God; and in such cases we most effectually combat him by dwelling, in spite of him, on the bright things God has set before us; for if we perplex ourselves to resist him, his object is gained. We shall meet, please God, so soon, I will not write much: besides, I have a great deal to do.

"Your own affectionate sister,

"E. S. B."

"My darling Fan:—You know my nursery is sometimes the school-room, where I

learn lessons for you; so I will send you some of the thoughts which came this morning. Baby was very fretful, and, though his nurse was not at all unkind, I thought it seemed to try her temper; and it was such a pleasure to me to take my darling in my own arms, press him close to my bosom, and feel, even in his waywardness, how dear and precious he was. Then I thought, 'If such a slight shade of irritation makes you like to take your babe from your nurse's arms, though you know she would do him no mischief, will your heavenly Father leave *you*, his beloved though wayward child, in the arms of a really cruel enemy, who longs for your destruction? You have, in the bitterness of your soul, sometimes said, you were delivered over unto Satan to be led captive by him at his will; but have you not most unkindly maligned your Father's love? You have lowered it not only to the level, but far below that, of your own, as an earthly mother.' Will not these few thoughts, darling, meet the dark doubts that sometimes rise in your weary spirit when the enemy seems to get such advantage over you?

"Dearest, I have been asked to contribute to a sale to support some very useful schools

in the neighbourhood. Would you, if convenient, make me some mats, or some other little trifles, before September?

"Your own loving E. S. B."

Fanny frequently lamented being able to do so little for others,—while those around her were surprised at the ingenuity and perseverance with which her one talent was laid out. Her ready aid was always at command for objects like the one just mentioned. Her dear father kept up her quarterly allowances as in her days of health, and they were chiefly expended on the materials and appliances for her little works of love and mercy. One of her sisters had established a knitting-school in the parish, to afford employment and a means of livelihood to some young women who were crippled, or otherwise kept from service. Its demands upon time, however, proved so numerous that they could hardly have been met, but for the effectual aid rendered by Fanny in preparing patterns and arranging the work, and this in the midst of suffering which it made the hearts ache of those around to witness.

Elizabeth was at Watton when she wrote

the next letter, but, as her weekly word of comfort was especially designed to cheer Fanny's early waking hour on the Sabbath morning, she did not hold herself excused from writing it, even when under the same roof:—

"WATTON, July 21, 1849.

"DEAREST SISTER:—Have you ever in your long weary trial drawn the comfort you might from the thought of the great work you are allowed to do for your gracious Saviour? It is pleasant for you to work for those you love; and lately your love to your own dear C—— has been so strong as to give you a sort of pleasure in the sacrifice of parting with her for her health's sake. But you have a greater pleasure still. You are every day doing much to show your love to Jesus. You show your entire confidence in his wisdom by the heart-deep feeling that, contrary to his all-wise will, you would not throw off your present trial. You show your desire after him by the weariness and sadness his absence causes. You show your wish to please him by each struggle with natural impatience. There is no merit to you in all this, for it is all his work, not your's. But there is proof

of love; and, as the tender Saviour marks it, he rejoices. Your love is sweet to him. His own work is beautiful in his eyes. Will not you rejoice with him, and bless his condescending love that thus delights in his poor, suffering child?

"God bless thee, dearest! The burden is *heavy*, but the strength is *Almighty*.

"Your affectionate sister,

"E. S. B."

A week of very sore suffering followed Elizabeth's return to Kelshall, and called forth the following:—

"July 28, 1849.

"My own Fan:—I fear, from all the accounts we have heard, that this has been a week of unusual suffering with you. Therefore, my own darling, it is a week during which the sympathizing love of Jesus has been especially drawn out towards you,—not, perhaps, in sensible comfort, but in that which is far more difficult for love to carry out, a continuation of suffering which pierced his own soul. Every sigh and every sorrowful look of affection, this past week, from those

who have watched beside you, has only been a faint image of the sympathizing sorrow of love which Jesus has felt while he continued to smite. Must he not have some weighty reason, some great result, to work out as the fruit of all this trial? else why should he repress those yearnings of love which would prompt him to instant relief? May he give you grace, my dear one, to trust him, now his dealings are so very dark! 'Light is sown for the righteous, and gladness for the upright in heart.' Your affectionate sister,

"E. S. B."

The next letter bears allusion to a time which is thus described in Mr. Bickersteth's Memoir:—"The visit of Dr. M'Neile, the first and the last which he ever paid to his beloved friend at Watton, was a season of high social and Christian enjoyment. The whole family circle, and one or two intimate friends, were gathered at the rectory, and a feast of Christian thought, feeling and friendship was enjoyed, of which the memory will not soon pass away. All the great subjects of interest affecting the kingdom of Christ, with which the thoughts of both were daily

and hourly occupied, were brought out in all the freedom of unrestricted communion; and memories of tne past, and hopes for the future, and grave reflections on the actual state and dangers of the church, were mingled—now with all the variety of playful anecdote, and now with calm and serious conversation on the deep things of God. Variously gifted by their common Lord, and alike highly honoured in his service, each seemed to give a free scope to his feelings of quiet joy in the other's presence and society; while the sickness of a beloved daughter shed a mellowing and tender influence of deeper sympathy with patient suffering, amidst the else unclouded sunshine of domestic and Christian joy. It was like the culminating point of God's abundant mercies, bestowed on the home and family of his beloved servant." Elizabeth's vivid participation in the joys of this season did not hinder her quick appreciation of the aspect of trial it might bear to Fanny.

"Aug. 11, 1849.

"DARLING FAN:—How do *you* look forward to the exciting week in prospect? so full of meeting, so rich in the pleasures of Christian

intercourse to others? Does it seem as if a blank was *your* portion, when others have life most crowded? Not so, dearest. Let us look at the essences of things. What is the real blessing of religious societies? Not excitement, not mere eloquence; but working for God, *showing love* to him. Love is *shown* by conformity to the *wishes* of the object beloved. And who shows that most convincingly? The Christian who presses on in a work he believes to be according to God's will, but which calls all the powers of his mind delightfully into exercise? or the Christian who is content that God's will should be done, though it crush his every faculty, both of mind and body? I believe, my dear one, you may have as busy a week as Dr. M'Neile. He will not have the opportunity you will, of every few minutes* acquiescing in God's will, offering the constant sacrifice of humble, struggling submission. We meet, please God, before many hours. It will be very pleasant to have a few days all together. Our dear, loving brother sheds a bright light even over a sick-room. Your own affectionate sister,

"E. S. B."

* Her attacks were at this time almost incessant.

Fanny was not altogether without her share in the privileges of this blessed season. The sympathy of their honoured guest seemed tenderly drawn out towards the suffering child of his friend. On the first evening of his arrival he went to her room after tea, took her hand, and, without one word of ordinary greeting, began to repeat, "Grace, mercy and peace be with you. Though the outward man perish, the inward man is renewed day by day. We all, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory." He then knelt beside her, and offered up a few earnest petitions, "that God's dealings would be very gentle with her as a bruised member of his own body, of his flesh and of his bones; as a tender and delicate lamb; that his Spirit would shine upon her in the midst of the darkness and dreariness, the uncertainty as to what was mental and what was bodily weakness; that she might have the enjoyment of large sympathy with others, and a deep interest in Christ's kingdom." His visit was very precious to her. "Some one must have told him before," she said, "just all that I was wishing and thinking." A day or two after,

she had been struggling for several hours with very severe suffering; and the text was brought home with power to her heart, "Is any sick, let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him in the name of the Lord," &c. So, at her especial request, Dr. M'Neile, her beloved father, and her two brothers, united in prayer around her bed. It was a blessed and cheering sight for our poor sufferer. Dr. M'Neile quite wrestled in fervent supplication with God "for present relief, for the speedy and happy termination of the trial in God's own time; and that while it lasted it might be for his glory." "Dear child!" he said, after they had left her; "there is a spectacle to men and angels carrying on upon that bed. I doubt not, she is doing more for the glory of God than many of us in the fore-front of the battle."

She enjoyed another of these little favoured seasons on the last evening before he left. When kneeling in the midst of the sister-band gathered round her, he committed this lamb of the fold once more to the care of the Good Shepherd, whispering a fervent benediction as he took leave of her:—"The Lord bless her, and bless them all." It was also the eve of Fanny's

birthday; and when the little tray of remembrances was brought in the next morning, a birthday text, written for her the night before by dear Dr. M'Neile, was not the least prized among them.

The family party scattered almost immediately after losing their guest. Elizabeth's next letter encourages her beloved sister to *wait* for an answer to the prayers which had been offered for her:—

"KELSHALL, Aug. 24, 1849.

"MY DARLING FAN:—It is written in that sure word which cannot fail, 'Whatsoever two or three of you shall agree to ask, *it shall be done.*' Here is a promise. Promises are the food of *faith;* but faith is not *sight.* If the gift came *at once,* in the very *form* and colour we expected, there would be no room for faith: it would be a gracious boon enjoyed by sight for the encouragement of future faith; but when we cry day and night, as Jesus did, (Ps. xxii.,) and there is nothing done to cause us to be silent, nothing to stay us,—when we ask for light, and darkness thickens,—when we plead for peace, and doubts and fears multiply,—when we beg for ease, and pain grows sharper,

—then to believe the prayer was answered, is naked faith. Sight is all against it, but God's word asserts it; and the soul waits on, holding fast by that, and that alone, till at last, with an interest multiplied a thousand fold, the promised boon is given. It is a hard strife; but if the tempted soul is but conqueror, how God is honoured! Satan has been allowed to encircle the child of God with all most likely to make it doubt its Father's word; and, despite of all, it will not distrust that Father's love and truth. My precious sister, you are just now in the sharp conflict, and it must be specially sore work; but God give you the victory, and your rest shall be glorious. Meanwhile, the Captain of your salvation is close by: he knows just how long you can hold out, and any moment he can appear for your rescue.

"Your own affectionate

"E. S. B."

"KELSHALL, Aug. 28, 1849.

"MY DARLING FAN:—I think you must be counting the days till the three weeks* are

* A period of general discomfort, when dire necessity, which would brook no further delay, gave over Watton Rectory into the hands of painters and workmen: the poor invalid, of course, shared largely in the inconvenience.

over. Have you workmen in the house whose heads ever ached, or are they as insensible as most of their clan to any noise short of the report of cannon? It makes me long to have you all here.

* * * * * *

"I was struck, in reading the beginning of Job, with its bearing on the subject of my last note, *God glorified in his children's afflictions.* Job was a perfect man; God seems to rest in his love, to delight over him, even amidst the hosts of heaven. 'Hast thou seen my servant Job?' Satan's envious malice throws a doubt over Job's sincerity. We do not, in this chapter, learn that Job specially needed chastisement, though we afterwards find, as every child of God will, how it yielded richly the peaceable fruits of righteousness; but here it comes in this form: a shade of suspicion is thrown over God's work in Job; it shall be gloriously vindicated. Angels shall see that he who served God in prosperity will serve him in anguish too. Satan's foul aspersions shall recoil upon himself. Job, indeed, shall suffer; but he shall have the privilege of bringing no common glory to God, and his sufferings shall be short; his latter end shall

be better than his beginning. I fear that I have imperfectly expressed the thought I seemed to trace, of angels learning God's glory in his people, and God's zeal that it should be perfectly manifested. I must remember I may be trying your poor head. Love to all.

"From your own affectionate,

"E. S. B."

"My darling Fan:—I am afraid it fares ill with you amidst the painters' tumults. Would I had you safe in some quiet room here! would I not just take good care of you? Well, darling, those dingy walls may want painting again and again; but diamonds, amethysts, rubies, gold and pearls want no renewing. No noisy repairs will jar on the celestial melody of our heavenly home, while no token of decaying lustre will vex our eyes there: all will be new, young, fresh, even in the most distant ages of eternity.

"Your own loving sister,

"E. S. B."

"Darling Fan:—As your head permits, read this extract from our good old Baxter, which seems just written for you. While to

ourselves our case seems so unique, in reality no temptation has taken us but such as is common to man, such as saints of old have struggled with,—ay, darling, and conquered too; and that with no other strength than we can also employ, even the strength of the Most High, imparted to them, promised to us.

"Your own affectionate

"E. S. B."

Extract.—"The only glorious and infinite God, who made the worlds, and upholdeth them by his power, who is attended by millions of his glorious angels, and praised continually by his heavenly hosts, to whom the whole world is as nothing, and lighter than vanity, which he will shortly turn into flames before your eyes; he commandeth me to tell you that *he takes notice of your sorrows.* He stands by when you see him not and say he hath forsaken you. He minds you with greatest tenderness, when you say he hath forgotten you. He numbereth your sighs, he bottles up your tears, and the groans of your heart do reach his own. He takes it unkindly that you are so suspicious of him, and that all that he hath done for you in the work of redemption,

and all your own peculiar experiences of his goodness, can raise you to no higher apprehensions of his love. Shall not love be acknowledged to be love, when it is grown to a miracle, when it surpasses comprehension? Do you see, and hear, and feel, and taste, mercy and love? Do you live wholly on it? And yet do you still doubt of it, and think so meanly of it, and so hardly acknowledge it? God takes not this well; but still he considereth your frailty, and takes you not at the worst. He knows that flesh will play its part, and the remnant of corruption will not be idle; and the serpent will be suggesting false thoughts of God, and will be still striving to obscure most that part of his glory which is dearest to him, and especially which is most conjoined with the happiness of man. He knows also that sin would breed sorrows and fears, and that man's understanding is shallow, and all his conceivings of God are exceeding low. Seeing, therefore, that at this distance no full apprehensions of love can be expected, it is the pleasure of our Redeemer shortly to return, with ten thousand of his saints, with his noble army of martyrs, with the attendance of his angels, and to give you such a convin-

cing demonstration of his love as shall leave no room for one more doubt. Your comforts are now out a taste; they shall be then a feast. They are now but intermittent; they shall be continual. How soon now do your conquered fears return, and what an unconstancy and unevenness is there in our peace! But there our peace must needs be perfect and permanent, when we shall please God, and enjoy him in perfection to perpetuity. It is *that*, and not *this*, that is your harvest. It is no more wonder that you are comfortless when heaven is forgotten or doubtings remembered, than that you are faint when you eat not, or cold when you stir not, or when you have not fire and clothes."

"Sept. 15, 1849.

"DARLING FAN:—While I was reading to a poor woman the other day that verse, 'They that sow in tears shall reap in joy,' the thought came into my mind, how disproportioned is the sowing to the reaping!—a few baskets of seed, many wagons groaning beneath the rich sheaves of harvest. This may be a type of the disproportion between life's sorrowful sowing and heaven's joyful reaping time. Yet,

while comparatively sorrows are light, sensibly they may be very heavy: we call the seed-basket light compared to the harvest burden, yet it might be a wearisome load to the man who carried it. The glory of our Bible is, while it tells truths of eternity which should take away much of the bitterness of time's sorrows, it owns so tenderly and fully how bitter the sorrows are. It calls them, not joyous, but grievous; it contains prayers for the *oppressed*, the *overwhelmed;* it tells of One afflicted in all our afflictions. Surely the Bible meets every want of our hearts. He who dictated it knows us; we need not fear to trust him.

"Your own affectionate

"E. S. B."

CHAPTER XI.

LAST LETTERS FROM HER FATHER—LETTERS FROM ELIZABETH—NEW HOPES OF RELIEF DISAPPOINTED—CHRISTMAS OF 1849—VISIT TO THE LIBRARY.

WHEN several members of the family were absent, Fanny came in for a liberal share of the letters brought by Saturday's post; for each sent a special letter designed to cheer her on the morning of Sunday. Her resolution was generally up to the mark of keeping the most tempting packets unopened till the day for which they were intended.

The following is from her father:—

"Sept. 1849.

"My beloved Fanny has seldom a letter from her father, as he is mostly with her. I look upon you not merely as a vessel of mercy preparing, by all your trials, for the Master's house and glory above, but as already bearing supplies for others. You are the missionary

to the family, and God, by you, is drawing out from each views of his truth, not only profitable for you, but unspeakably profitable to ourselves. We are taught the wise and deep and unfathomable love of our God, in that which seems outside all severity; we are taught the power of his grace in sustaining a weak creature; we are taught perfected family bliss is larger and fuller than earth can afford; we are taught nothing but God himself is the rest, portion and full joy of the soul; and you are the missionary by whom God brings home these precious lessons. Glorify God, then, my child, not by being a foreign missionary to the heathen, nor a London city missionary to London, but a Watton Rectory missionary to the rector and all his family day by day, and they will try to realize 'He that watereth shall himself also be watered;' and then, when we reach our heavenly home, we shall see how wonderfully beyond all our thoughts God was blessing us and making all work for our good.

"Your affectionate father,

"EDWARD BICKERSTETH."

One more of these invigorating words from

her father we must insert: it appears to be the last she ever received from him:—

"LIVERPOOL, Oct. 19, 1849.

"MY DEAR SICK ONE:—With a great deal of work, I must yet give you a token of Sunday remembrance. What a comfort is the promise, 'I will never leave you!' Your other best friends have their leaving-times; God never leaves. He is your shade at your right hand, from the burning sun of temptation; he is your fountain, perhaps invisible, like Hagar's, (Gen. xxi. 19;) but God can open the eyes, and enable us to draw living water. Dear child, cleave to him: he loves you with intense love.

"God is prospering my journey. I have already travelled above eight hundred miles, protected by his love.

"Your affectionate father,

"E. BICKERSTETH."

The following are from Elizabeth:—

"KELSHALL, Oct. 20, 1849.

"DARLING FAN:—The subject of our sermon on Sunday last was especially suitable

to you: it was the impotent man at the pool of Bethesda. What struck me was, that the poor man's disease, the very thing which made the cure so essential to him, disabled him so that he could not seek it; he could not step into the pool. Is not this like you, dearest? too ill to pray when prayer seems most needful. But, when Jesus came, all the poor man's difficulties were at an end. Jesus required no exertion, no co-operation, in the cure,—only a willingness to be made whole. So, darling, if you cannot pray, your wants are known before you ask. You have only to wish for deliverance, and the Deliverer is near.

"Jesus knows, too, how long you have suffered, and that this is one great element of your trial. He is not surprised to hear you say, 'I am weary, weary.' He will not reproach you for this, but only say, in the gentlest tones of love, 'Come unto me, and I will give you rest.' . . .

"Your own affectionate sister,

"E. S. B."

"My darling Fan:—What can I say to comfort you after a week of such special suf-

fering? You have your greatest earthly comfort with you, now all your dear sisters are around you, and you have the greatest heavenly comfort, for Jesus is round about your bed. You can tell your troubles to your sisters, because they understand you at half a word; but you could not give a long, loud explanation of them. Sometimes even the half word comes out with a felt and painful effort. Now, dearest, take this thought for to-day: even the half word is not necessary with your heavenly Friend; he understands an anxious, troubled look, if it be but turned upwards towards him. He needs not ask, 'What aileth thee?' for he knows every sorrow: if it be a relief to open the heart and tell all, he says, 'Pour out your heart before him;' but if the spirit be too weak for such an effort, it is enough to look unto him and be saved.

"Your own affectionate

"E. S. B."

Fanny's case had for a long time been considered a hopeless one, and any attempts at even mitigating her suffering had hitherto generally failed; yet seasons of aggravated distress, like that to which the last letter refers,

seemed to make any experiments worth while that were not palpably absurd or injurious. A remedy was at this time proposed, as offering rather relief than cure, but which might be safely and constantly used, and, if successful, would tend greatly to soothe the distress arising from irritated nerves. A kind friend, who was skilled in its application, visited Watton Rectory for the purpose at the end of October, and hope would creep in as to a favourable issue. We borrow from an account of his visit written at the time:—

"After tea, Mr. —— signified his willingness to go at once to Fan's room, and gladly acquiesced in papa's proposition first to unite together in prayer for a blessing, and just to leave the result in God's hands. Then, for the first time, hope began to dawn to me: the possibility that she might be cured as others had been, and all the bright delicious anticipations connected with such a hope, rushed into one's mind. So much seemed to hang on those few moments; for our friend had told us that cases which were benefited at all generally showed symptoms of amendment within three or four minutes. Mamma,

C—— and Mrs. A—— were in the room, which was dimly lighted; H—— and I leaned breathlessly against the door outside. We counted the moments of silence; they seemed long in our impatience, and our hearts leaped up with the hope that she was gaining ease; but the low moan of her returning attack, always piteous enough to our ears, startled us in the stillness, and had seldom seemed so sorrowful before, as when ringing the death-knell of the last faint hope which was glimmering over her lifetime of sorrow. I think that 'God's will be done,' was our next thought; we would not, if we could, have taken it out of his hands, and we felt assured that an answer to our prayer would come when and where we least expected. Mr. —— would not give up all hope; he remained nearly an hour in her room, but never once succeeded in preventing a recurrence of her attacks."

The disappointment to Fanny was aggravated by the singularity of the failure. Our friend visited several cases of severe suffering in the parish during the few days that he was our guest, and applied the same remedy with very marked success. On the 2d of November,

we find this notice:—"Mr. —— left us early; our poor F. had not had a wink of sleep all night, and was suffering grievously." Surely one must see the direct hand of God which withholds from *her* the relief others have enjoyed so largely, and there is deep comfort in this.

On the next day, Elizabeth writes:—

"Nov. 3, 1849.

"DARLING FAN:—It seems to me that this Sabbath morning will find you more than usually struggling to maintain the spirit of submission. The exhilaration of hope, the painful disappointment, with the faint hope attending continued endeavours, will all tend to take away from you a quiet, trusting spirit, and to excite and agitate you. But, dearest, even this very Sabbath morning the command is imperative, '*Cast* thy burden on the Lord, and he shall sustain thee.' 'Wait on the Lord, be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart.' Resign your hand to your gracious, loving Guide. He will lead you aright. You may shrink, if the way is dark and cold. He notices that shrinking, and, though you observe it not, bends over you with a tenderer look of love. But resist,

draw back, you would not, dare not. The rough, dark way is safe. He has hold of you, and will never, never suffer you to be plucked out of his hands.

"Your affectionate sister,

"E. S. B."

"Dec. 1, 1849.

"My darling Fan:—I have been struck, in reading the 3d of Lamentations, to see how it represents the struggles of a sorely-exercised spirit. It begins with the hopelessness of despair. Even the resource of prayer has failed. 'When I cry and shout, he shutteth out my prayer.' Words of desolation crowd thick in every verse, till at last the light dawns: 'The Lord is my portion, saith my soul, therefore will I hope in him.' Again the flood of grief passes over: 'We have transgressed and rebelled; thou hast not pardoned.' But it is more hopeful; deliverance as well as sorrow is remembered. And 'Thou *hast* heard my voice,' is an encouragement to the plea, 'Hide not thine ear at my breathing, at my cry.' You too, dearest, have gleams of light, though darkness closes over them again and again. Remember, when the

cloud passes from the natural sky, the *true* glory of the heavens is revealed. And so it is when the cloud is most removed from your spirit: you see God most *truly* revealed. He *is* the loving, gracious Father. He appears to you in bright moments of communion. . . .

"Much love from all. It seems a long time that we are separated from you in winter.

"Your affectionate sister,

"E. S. B."

"Dec. 15, 1849.

"What can I say to my darling sister this afternoon? What source of comfort has not again and again been opened to her? That is true; but God's comforts are fountains ever flowing; and those whose thirst is ever returning are never weary of having recourse to them. The thought of a Saviour's sympathy never loses its sweetness, nor the rest of heaven its soothingness, nor the promise of his hourly succour its strong sense of support. Then his sympathy is so fresh! In a long illness the trial of the sufferer must of necessity become a part of the daily family life. But Jesus watches every passing change of feeling, measures every sorrow, realizes as

fully the anguish of every hour as when first the affliction came on in all its power. He has given you, darling, such tender care in all around you as few invalids possess; but the richest love of all is his own.

"Your own loving sister,

"E. S. B."

On Christmas-day she, for the last time, received from her precious father's hand the bread and wine, sealing to each of their souls that hope of salvation which both are now enjoying in their Saviour's presence. The family gathering round the fire met this evening in Fan's room, and for the first time she made one of the circle by sitting among them in her easy-chair; but we do not gather from Elizabeth's letter that there had been any improvement in her symptoms:—

"Dec. 28, 1849.

"DEAREST FAN:—I am sorry you have had such a trying Christmas. You keep few feasts on earth, dearest; but all will be more than made up for when you sit down at the marriage-supper of the Lamb. Your preparation is long and wearisome; but then the

feast is to be long and very glorious. You shall go no more out. All mental, social, and I may add spiritual pleasures, of which your disease now deprives you, shall then be more than made up, in the immediate presence of Jesus. Meanwhile, He who is the same *yesterday*, *to-day* and *forever* has not such love in store for the future, and none for the present. He loves you now. He now rejoices in his love, and you may now rest upon it.

"Your affectionate sister,

"E. S. B."

Though there had been no improvement in the head-symptoms, Fanny's perseverance in making attempts to leave her bed was rewarded with increasing success. For some months she had been refreshed by an occasional change of room up-stairs. But we find her celebrating the New Year by a visit to the dear old library,—always her favourite room,—the scene of her mid-day walks, and her Sunday afternoons with Elizabeth in the winter. On the 4th of January she spent the whole morning there with the family party; and a thankful joy it seemed, to be again united after four years of separation. And

what were the dear one's own feelings, as her eye rested on each familiar object, seen now for the first time since the autumn of 1845, before her visit to Torquay? Shall we confess that they were very mingled? that any prospect of *bodily* restoration, which seemed indefinitely to lengthen out the period during which she must struggle under her daily burden, had for her an aspect of trial? that the contrast between her former interests and her present incapacity was more keenly felt when she saw the occupations going on in which she had once delighted to share? There were not many to whom she would have confessed such feelings, for she dreaded to seem ungrateful; but Elizabeth was in her confidence, and had a word of comfort to offer:—

"Jan. 7, 1850.

"I was thinking, dear, with reference to the little trials attending your coming downstairs, which *is* such a mercy, and to strangers might seem such an *unmingled* one, that you must stay yourself specially on the sympathy of Christ. He knew what it was, amidst all the cheerful social and domestic scenes of life, to have a burden peculiarly his own to bear.

When he sat at the marriage-feast, at the Pharisee's festive board, there were none there who knew the load which rested on the Redeemer's mind,—the burden of a world's salvation! Your burden is of a different kind, and far different intensity; yet it weighs you down, and makes you sorrowful while others are glad. He who was the man of sorrows even in the most joyous scenes, ever fixes his loving eye on the sorrowing one of a company; such a one has, in a peculiar manner, fellowship with him.

"Your own affectionate

"E. S. B."

CHAPTER XII.

THE LAST FAMILY GATHERING—THE FIRST HOUR OF THE NEW YEAR—GATHERING CLOUDS—HER FATHER'S ILLNESS—HIS INTERCOURSE WITH HIS SICK CHILD—THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH—THE HALLOWED ROOM—ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE FUTURE—LAST LETTERS FROM ELIZABETH—THE TWO SUNSETS.

WE have nearly brought to a close the faithful Sunday correspondence which for three years and a half had been to our darling sufferer as rivers in the desert. A happy family gathering at Watton Rectory, during this month, took the place of letters. Fan made rapid progress in her power of moving about: between two supporters she even walked down-stairs; and their beloved father could now sometimes number his six children around him when he turned to the fireside for those little opportunities of family intercourse which all so dearly prized. The library was also the music-room; and, though F. could no longer be a listener, the temptation one evening to seat herself at the piano was too strong

to be resisted. Love of music was a passion with her; it was with a strange thrill of surprise and pleasure her sisters saw that the slender wasted fingers were still at home among the keys; four years of suffering had not effaced from her memory Weber's last waltz, and they could hardly restrain their tears as, with a feeble but exquisitely tender touch, she dwelt upon the prolonged chords of that beautiful melody.

If the current of life at Watton Rectory had flowed on quietly, it is difficult to say to what extent this improvement in physical strength might have restored her to the home-circle: in looking back upon it now, her family see it to have been a gracious provision for the time of deep and untried sorrow which was before them. Nothing was further from their thoughts than such a bereavement; they had prayed together "the old year out and the new year in," enjoying the deep stillness, and the last solemn tones of the old church-clock as it rung the death-knell of 1849. As they rose from their knees, they turned with joyful because prayerful hope to the unknown future which the new year ushered in, and welcomed it by singing together:—

"I my Ebenezer raise
To my dear Redeemer's praise;
With a grateful heart I own
Hitherto thy help I've known.

"What may be my future lot
Well I know concerns me not:
This should set my heart at rest,
What thy will ordains is best."

How would this expression of confidence in their heavenly Father's wisdom and love have borne the test of a glimpse forward into the year they were entering? Its *first* month closed upon their newly-awakened fears for the life of their precious parent; its *second* left them fatherless!

The happy family party dispersed on the 22d of January, and within a week signs were noticed of the gathering storm which was to desolate their home. Any thing which touched their father seemed to shake to its foundation the fabric of their earthly happiness. His public life had never withdrawn him from his family, and all the great interests of the Church and Kingdom of Christ, glorious and heart-stirring in their own nature, were to them endeared and rendered intimate by the active part their beloved father was called

to take in them, and the generous confidence with which he invited their sympathy and participation. It did not need that they should lose him, in order to find out what he was to them; and, after an interval of ten years, memories of him are as fresh as ever.

It will have been seen, from his letters to his sick child, how tenderly his sympathies were drawn out to her. A daily pastoral visit from him, when he was at home, was one of her principal means of grace; and he always knew how to throw into the few simple words which her head would bear, a strong, practical assurance of the love of God in Christ Jesus, which helped her to "take heart" again: it was next to feeling the cheering sunbeam herself, to see it so brightly reflected from him. It is needless to dwell upon the particulars of his illness, since they have been fully given in his Memoir: though he lingered a month with us, the symptoms were from the first alarming, so that all his children were assembled at Watton. The newly-acquired power of moving about was now most precious to Fanny; she spent hours on the couch in his room, and in his conscious intervals many a special word was addressed to her. Before one

of the seasons of torpor which were characteristic of his illness, and from which it was always so doubtful whether he would ever rouse again, his last words were to her, (torpor had gradually been creeping on; he seemed to understand with difficulty, and that only after some moments, that she was at his bedside: then he said,) "The Lord bless thee, my child, and make thee a blessing! If we honour our Saviour and his truth, he will honour us; if we rally round his truth, he will make us strong to support it." His eyelids sunk, and he said no more. On another occasion: "Wearisome days and nights are appointed us, my Fanny; *but it is all well.*" And again: "You and I are poor, weak creatures, dear; but He shall change this vile body until it is like his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself. It is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; sown in corruption, it shall be raised in incorruption."

If weakness deprived her of the dear privilege of actively ministering to his wants, she probably contributed as largely to his comfort as any of her sisters, by giving up to him, for the last ten days of his life, her room and

water-bed. It was a delicious joy to her to watch the ease which it afforded to him,—a joy, no doubt, enhanced by the real sacrifice of her own comfort and rest which it entailed.

Perhaps none of her sisters had so fully experienced before all that God had given to them in their beloved Bessie. After the first few days, during which she was detained at Kelshall by illness, she took her place among them as a most effective nurse and one of their dearest comforts. She knew that the loss of their father would have in it one element of grief for *them* which it had not for *her:* so, in addition to the sorrow which she bore *with* them, there was an undertone of tender sympathy, which made their intercourse with her peculiarly refreshing. What she was to her father is best told in the fervent blessing with which he enriched her a little more than a week before his death:—"My Bessie, you have been a comfort to me ever since you were born; God return to thee a thousand-fold all thy filial love, and make thy children the same blessing to thee, or a greater,—return unto thy bosom full measure, pressed down and running over. I have nothing but glowing love to you and your's."

In the near approach of so terrible a bereavement, every other feeling was absorbed; yet it could not but be remembered afterwards how the grace of God had at this time been magnified in his long-tried and feeble child. For her there was no remission of her ordinary suffering; on the contrary, the agitation and suspense from which it was impossible to shield her were serious aggravations in a disease which, above all, demanded quiet and composure. But she did not seek to lighten her own burden by laying one feather's weight of it on those around her at this time: there was One whose ear was as open to her now as it had been in their brightest days of family prosperity, and in His strength she bore with uncomplaining patience each addition to her own daily portion of sorrow. After giving up her room to her dear father, she occupied one which opened into it, so as to be as little as possible separated either from him or from those who watched around him. She shared with them the oppression of a fearful season of torpor during the last week of his life, which made his presence among them but a breathing death for seventy-two hours; and she was one of those who gathered round him

in the night to share the gladness of his returning consciousness. "We had gone to rest," one of her sisters writes, "feeling ourselves already 'fatherless,' thinking we could never hear his voice of love again or receive his fond blessing, when, at one o'clock, E. called us up with the glad words, 'He is conscious.' How joyfully we hurried to his room and stood around him! We were all there. Even poor Fan crept out of bed. His eye was bright and beaming with love as he looked on so many familiar faces, brightened, as they had not been for many a long hour, with the joy of his restoration. Not that we thought it was permanent, or likely to be so; but it was such a delight to have him himself back again, to hear him speak, to watch his looks; and he knew us all, when mamma stooped to kiss him. 'Tell mamma I want a cup of cold water.' But he seemed too feeble to bear much, and, after a few minutes of strangely mingled joy and solemnity, (for the impression was strong on several of our minds that God was then about to take him,) we separated."

During the few days that yet remained, he was too feeble and too generally unconscious to seem aware of the presence of his sick child,

or to address more than a few scarcely audible words to those in immediate attendance upon him. For Fanny, then, intercourse with him on earth was closed; but he had yet a great work to do for her. To exchange the body of sin and infirmity for the presence of her Saviour was the sustaining hope which carried her through weeks and months of suffering; but there were times when she looked with almost unqualified dread on *the unknown passage*, the *act of transition*. She had never seen death: the *sorest* bereavement in the family was also the *first*. When the last morning dawned, and it became evident that her beloved father's hours were numbered, strong affection overcame every other feeling, and drew her into the circle of those who were gathered round to watch him to the end. This, then, was the valley of the shadow of death, from the damp chill of which her spirit had recoiled, and one dear to her as her own soul was treading it in her presence. Human affection could not lend its aid to sustain him, for he returned to the endearments of wife and children no answering sign of consciousness; and the parting kiss upon his brow, with which each sorrowing one sealed their separation,

was received in silence; but in the beaming eye they read the fulfilment of the promise, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee." The departing spirit had retired from the outer circle of human recognition and intercourse: it was alone with Jesus, and very glorious was the reflection of his presence. Each eye was riveted by the beauty of that radiant look, contrasting strongly as it did with the weary languor of the mortal body, sinking thankfully into its last unbroken slumber. Thus hour after hour passed, and Fanny still watched him from her couch, gathering strength and courage for her own hour of need, till at the last, when all was over, and glory still lingered in his eye, she could whisper, "It has quite taken my fear of death away."

Her room seemed hallowed as the very gate of heaven. For the week which intervened between his entrance into glory and committing to the grave his honoured earthly remains, the bereaved ones felt as if every temporal care and grief might lawfully be set aside, while they sought to keep open, by faith and prayer, the door through which he had been admitted to "the Father's house." And when

these days were over, and the fact had to be steadily contemplated that Watton Rectory, the scene of all their family happiness for nearly twenty years, must be given up, a blessed balm was provided, in the wish affectionately urged by Elizabeth and her husband, and which had already received their dear father's sanction, that Kelshall should be the family home. The rectory was large, and only partially occupied by its present inmates; here the declining years of their only remaining parent might be cherished and protected, while to the rest of the family would be preserved the wonted interests of a clergyman's household, and the opportunities, which by habit and association were so congenial to them, of usefulness in a country parish.

The state of their dear invalid pleaded strongly in favour of such an arrangement. Kelshall was only thirteen miles from Watton; and, since any removal must in her case be attended with great suffering, it was a real object to choose a home for her within a short distance. No other mitigation could have so greatly softened to Fanny the trial of leaving Watton as the prospect of renewed daily intercourse with her beloved sister.

Elizabeth was a great deal at Watton during the two sorrowful months that the family still remained there, and her time when at Kelshall was much engrossed with necessary preparations; yet her F—— seems still to have had a share of her thoughts. A little fragment which she sent to her at this time expresses a very tender appreciation of her grief:—

"When some beloveds, 'neath whose eyelids lay
The sweet lights of my childhood, one by one,
Did leave me dark before the natural sun,
And I astonish'd fell, and could not pray,
A thought within me to myself did say,
Rise, worship, bless Him! in this sackcloth clad,
As in that crimson! but I answer'd, 'Nay!
What child his filial heart in words conveys,
If him for very good his Father choose
To smite? What can he but with sobbing breath
Embrace the unwilling hand that chasteneth?
And my dear Father, thinking fit to bruise,
Discerns in silent tears both prayer and praise."

The following parable seems also to have been written for her:—

THE TWO SUNSETS.

It was the close of a warm summer day: the sun, which had been shining with un-

wonted brilliancy through the cloudless air, was now sinking slowly to his rest, and all nature exulted in his beams. The mid-day light is dazzling in its glory, but there is something lovelier far in the chastened glow of evening; even the misty clouds and the heavy clods of earth catch something of its radiant colouring. This evening I gazed with peculiar delight: it carried me in spirit to the bedside of one very dear. I had watched his eagle spirit in the days of health and strength, and sometimes striven to rise on the wings of his lofty faith. I had watched him, like the glorious orb before me, sink unclouded into rest, shedding a chastened light even on the feeblest of those who waited around his couch.

But there was one left to me still, to whom my thoughts soon reverted, and a dull, heavy cloud of weakness and weariness rested over that loved one. Her's had been an April day of heavy showers and dewy trembling sunbeams; but now the mist seemed gathering thickly around, as if her sun were to sink amidst clouds and darkness. Hush, unbelieving heart! At whose bidding has the dull gray mist gathered over what was once so fondly admired? Has he not, too, power to

dispel it with a word, and bid brightness mingle with every tear-drop, or paint the rainbow on this lowering cloud? Or what if it still hang heavy over her horizon, dost thou not see how richly it is charged with showers of blessing? And because it now hides the glory of the sun, dost thou fear that his beams are withdrawn? Wert thou but nigh enough to heaven, the cloudiest sunset of earth would be bathed in light; and He who sits upon the throne above sees something of this brightness thrown over the suffering couch of each child whom his right hand upholds in the hour of woe.

The following letter closed the Sunday correspondence:—

"April 5, 1850.

"DEAREST FAN:—This will, I suppose, be almost the last Sunday note I shall write to you. I can hardly believe that I am coming on Tuesday for a last visit. My darling, it will be a great comfort to have you under our roof, and to try and help you under the heavy burden God has given you to bear. How gracious he is! even in affliction making fresh

openings of love. He, our heavenly Father, can never, even for a season, as our earthly father has done, leave or forsake. What lessons of earth's uncertainty we have had! But, my Fan, we must not forget, St. Paul draws two lessons from the truth that 'time is short;' not only that 'they that rejoice should be as though they rejoiced not,' but that 'they who weep should be as though they wept not.' A solemnity is cast over earth's brightest joys, because, any moment, that which we looked upon as the joy of many years may suddenly be snatched from us; but earth's sorrows, too, are lightened by the thought that the trials to which we have been looking forward so despondingly may never come; years of anticipated trial on earth may be spent in heaven's own rest. To-day's burden, my dearest, is all you have any right to lade yourself with, much as the enemy tries, especially just now, to slip in a few leaden weights out of to-morrow.

"Your own affectionate sister,

"E. S. B."

CHAPTER XIII.

LEAVING WATTON—DRIVE THROUGH THE CHURCHYARD AND VILLAGE—FANNY'S LIFE AT KELSHALL—MARRIAGE OF HER YOUNGEST SISTER—OUTWARD PERISHING AND INWARD GROWTH—FANNY'S LETTERS—GROWING UNSELFISHNESS—VISIT TO THE CHURCH.

By the end of April the home of her childhood was dismantled, and all was in readiness for beloved F——'s removal. Through mercy, a quiet night on the 30th of April prepared her for the bodily and mental suffering of the morrow. Four years ago it had appeared unlikely that she would be spared long enough to reach her home and to see her father again. Now *her* little bark seemed to be driven back and becalmed in mid-ocean, while *his* had entered the harbour; and with him the very idea of *home* seemed transferred from earth to heaven.

As the carriage passed the churchyard, it was stopped for a few moments, and for the first and last time she saw her father's grave. The village was lined with the affectionate

people, who were anxious for another farewell look from their minister's family; and the tears and blessings which followed his widow and children told how deeply he had been loved. Many an anxious, sympathizing glance was turned to the poor invalid, who was by this time suffering severely from the motion, though the kindness of a friend had supplied a carriage with the easiest springs which could be furnished. It was little that friends or nurses could do to give her ease then, and the thirteen miles had to be travelled in pain and weakness. It is sweet now to think that it was her last journey. A little more than two years passed away, and the same family of mourners travelled back the same road; but their grief was for themselves, and not for her: her soul had escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowler, and they were bearing her loved remains, peaceful in their last slumber, to that Watton grave which was already to them the most sacred place on earth!

The aggravation of suffering, brought on by the journey, was, through mercy, relieved by some sharp remedies; and she had the best medicine for a wounded spirit, in the tender and thoughtful love with which Eliza-

beth had provided for all her little comforts. She had contrived to bring together so many familiar objects and home associations in the large bedroom appropriated to her use, that it was instinctively felt to be "the Watton Rectory" of the house. Her water-bed was placed near a cheerful south window, which overlooked a wide extent of wooded pasture-land; and many a pleasant half-hour did Fanny spend in watching country sights, and tracing imaginary walks along the hedge-rows, or across the sunny fields. There was no gloom about her sick-room,—no darkened windows, or voices hushed to a whisper. She was full of gratitude, indeed, for any little thoughtfulness which would avoid in her presence the discussion or lengthened conversation which might be trying to her head, but she seemed to be entirely free from that morbid self-occupation which makes some invalids desire to be the centre of interest in their own room. She dearly prized her sister's company. "If you don't mind sitting with Fan, darling, it is a great treat to see you." But she took care that "sitting with Fan" should imply little or no interruption to the study or writing done in her room, suppress-

ing as far as possible any expression of suffering in her attacks, lest sisterly love should be engrossed with her. There are looks which always hang about the heart; and such a look was this dear one's smile: like a rainbow on the falling shower, one never looked up without meeting it. It was an easy task, during her illness, to take a portrait of her; for this bright satisfied smile—the consciousness of loving and being loved—was the unvarying expression whenever one glanced at her features.

She generally remained in her room till evening, and then was able to spend an hour in the family circle, leaving it, however, before family prayer, which would have been too great an exercise of attention for her head. A few short petitions with her sister C——, before they parted for the night, was all that she could bear. Elizabeth's thoughtful love had apportioned to this sister a bedroom opening into F——'s; and it was touching to see her gratitude for the arrangement, and the eager look directed to the door, which was always left a little way open for her gratification.

So the summer and the winter passed away,

and brought little variation in her life. In the spring of 1851, her youngest sister was married, and Fan's heart soon found a warm place for her new brother. She was remarking to him that she had just completed the fifth year of an invalid life. "It will not be five years more, Fan," he said; and, as professional knowledge gave him a right to express an opinion on the subject, she took great comfort from it, and often referred to it. "W—— H—— says I shall not have five years more of this." Certainly it was a natural conclusion to form: the whole system seemed disorganized. For the last year and a half of her life, she suffered acute bodily pain from tic-douloureux, and the slender meals she was able to take were often followed by exhausting attacks of sickness, lasting for an hour at a time.

Meanwhile, the process of refining was advancing rapidly. Notwithstanding the sadness of seeing her suffer, her room was the happiest place in all the house,—the place where her sisters were sure to see the bright side of things, and to learn that to the watchful eye and thankful heart, mercies lie thickly strewn along the path of suffering.

"Some murmur when their sky is clear,
And wholly bright to view,
If one small speck of dark appear
In their great heaven of blue.
While some with thankful love are fill'd
If but one streak of light,
One ray of God's great mercy, gild
The darkness of their night.

"In palaces are hearts that ask,
In discontent and pride,
Why life is such a dreary task,
And all good things denied?
While hearts in lowly huts admire
How love has in their aid,
Love that not ever seems to tire,
Such rich provision made."

Among a little hoard of treasured scraps in her last pocket-book, we find the following. It was a hint which she habitually translated into action:—"Maintain confidence in God by looking out for instances of his love during the day: they will not be wanting; and when you meet with them, let a word of grateful response rise from your heart to God. Will not this blessed intercourse forever exclude the thought that you are forgotten, forsaken? that he is dealing hardly with you?"

When her sisters were absent, the packet

of letters from home was often enriched with a few lines in pencil from Fan. A few quotations will show her grateful, loving spirit:—

"My own dearest H——:—Many thanks for your last *welcome* packet. I shall often think of the corallines, and of the sweet lesson my dear sister drew from it for me. I think I have found more help than ever in the lessons from Nature, since I have been cut off from reading. I have *so* enjoyed this last fortnight a beautiful little *thrush*, who begins his song with the daylight, (I feel sure he is *sent* as a messenger of love,) and gives me such lovely music all day just at intervals. How tenderly the Lord does provide for our pleasures as well as our wants! Fond love from

"Your own

"Fan."

"My own precious C——·—You may well imagine what joy spread through our party at the welcome tidings which your dear note brought us to-day. Oh, how very sweet next Thursday, please God, will be! My own C—— in her room again at night. It does do one good to think of; and kind W——

H—— to spare us his wife! Oh, how very gracious the Lord is in providing us these sweet comforts by the way, though he seems a somewhat rough way, the right path to our city of habitations. . . .

"Your own

"F——."

Her sister H——'s removal from home, like that of Elizabeth in former years, was the occasion of F——'s receiving from her a weekly portion for Sunday. *Her* new home was in the midst of all the stirring social activity of a crowded watering-place; and many a choice thought or anecdote was gleaned for Fan during the week. On one occasion she wrote to her of a boy whose slender stock of wit scarcely placed him above idiocy in the social scale, but who seems to have been inwardly taught by the Spirit a knowledge above all human wisdom; for when a friend, wishing to find out whether he had any ideas on the subject, said to him one day, "It is hard work, is it not, to get to heaven?" he was surprised to receive the answer, "No: it is easy. There are only three steps:—*first*, out of self; *second*, into Christ; *third*, into

heaven." F—— answers, with reference to this:—

"My own darling H——:—It was so pleasant to hear from you on Saturday, and your interesting little story will, I trust, furnish me with help on many Sundays,—though I cannot quite agree with the poor boy that it is very *easy* to step *out of self*. I believe, if we could once do this, the other steps would be easy enough; but Satan makes this first lesson a very hard one, as I have specially found the last five years. You must pray chiefly for me, dearest, that, as my little stock of earthly knowledge is now growing less and less, the Lord himself may be my teacher, to make me truly wise to know Christ. I must stop, or my head will resent it. Much love to dearest W—— H——.

"Your own fond sister,

"Fan."

Once, and only once more, were earthly hopes excited in the minds of her friends as to the possibility of her being restored to a measure of health. One of the foreign brethren, who had come over for the General Evan-

gelical Alliance Conference, held in London in the August of this year, (1851,) was introduced to one of her sisters, and his love for her father's name led to inquiries as to his family. F——'s case was mentioned: it excited his liveliest interest, for he considered that an invention of his own, which had been the means of relief and cure to thousands, was applicable to it. Without entering into details, it may be briefly described as "dry cupping on a large scale." He asked permission to go down to Kelshall and try it himself. Under the most favourable circumstances, he could only lead her to expect very *gradual* improvement, and that by a persevering use of the remedy. Hopes, therefore, as to its ultimate success, were for some time entertained. Dear F——'s own feelings about it are thus expressed:—

"DEAREST W—— H——:—What a good brother you are, to send your sister F—— such a welcome packet this morning! Many thanks for your kind inquiries, dearest, about my new remedy. I scarcely know yet what its real effect will be: it has at present weakened me a good deal, and my head is relieved;

but then weakness always has relieved it, so that I do not rely much on this improvement, while my strength is lowered. I do feel specially to need your prayers, dearest brother, and my H——'s, concerning this. I dare not wish either way for myself. This long starvation of mind has, I feel, so weakened its powers, that the thought of beginning afresh the duties of life seems much more alarming than inviting: it seems setting me down at the bottom of a steep hill, when I thought I had just reached the top; and yet the hope of relief from this poor head's trials, especially since they do not seem to draw my earthly course any nearer to its close, ought to raise much thankfulness in my heart. How I should like an hour with you, dear brother! I feel you would so thoroughly sympathize with my present conflict of heart; but you will pray for me about it. I cannot help longing very much for *the rest*, but I fear the Lord sees much still that needs the furnace of *waiting*. Perhaps you will be able to write me again soon. Forgive this *selfish* note, and receive fond love for H—— and yourself, from your sister

"FAN."

A stranger would little have suspected, from F——'s cheerful, quiet manner, that so much of inward struggle and conflict was still carried on. She sometimes alludes to it in her little notes:—

"My own H——:—Your note of this morning was quite a comfort to me, and though this head will not stand much, as I have had a trying morning, I must tell you how precious is to me the assurance of your united prayers for me. I confess, when I think of what is asked for me, and look at the darkness and unbelief within, and the constant bondage of terror and conflict under which this spirit struggles, the Lord's answer seems a very mysterious one, in that bodily infirmity seems such a constant *drawback* to the soul; but perhaps the lesson of *waiting* is what I most want now. This head resists the writing so much, I must stop short. Much love to dearest W—— H——.

"Your fond
"Fan."

On hearing some particulars of the death of a bright and long-tried Christian, she writes:—

"My own dearest H——:—Many thanks for the sweet account you sent me of dear Mrs. S——'s happy end: it is very encouraging, but also very humbling, my H——, to see the bright light in the souls of other tried Christians, and to feel the continually returning darkness in my own *faith* and *love*. These are what you must chiefly ask for me in prayer, my dearest. I am afraid the sorrow-key has often lately led my harp to an inharmonious song of murmur; but you will pray for me when I cannot for myself.

"Your own
"Fan."

She has "read the mystery right now, in the full sunshine of his smile," and her heavenly harpings vibrate no longer in the "sorrow-key;" though, perchance, in the gush of grateful praise poured forth in their Saviour's presence by those who have been chosen in the furnace of affliction, there may linger those undertones of tender and chastened beauty which even in earthly music cause the heart to overflow with solemn joy.

We must insert one more of the little papers kept in her pocket-book for constant use, as it

may be a comfort to other invalids. She still occasionally received the sacrament from her dear brother, Mr. Birks; and Elizabeth wrote for her the following thoughts at the close of 1851, that she might prepare for this blessed ordinance with as little as possible of mental effort:—

"SICK-ROOM PREPARATION FOR THE SACRAMENT.

"ACT OF REPENTANCE.—I am too ill to examine and trace the windings of sin within, yet I am hourly conscious of extreme *weakness:* I am humbled by weakness of body, weakness of mind, weakness of purpose, weakness of spirit. I am conscious of constant *earthliness:* else why, when I am too weak to guide my thoughts, do they constantly turn earthward, not heavenward?

"I am conscious of ever-rising *self-will:* else why is it so hard to submit to the chastening hand of the Lord? For my weakness, my earthliness, my self-will, I humble myself in the sight of God. I hate sin, for it has brought on me the heavy load of suffering under which I hourly groan. I hate sin, for

it brought far bitterer suffering on my beloved Saviour, when he exhausted its curse for me.

"Act of Faith.—I receive this bread and wine as a pledge of pardon from my Saviour's hands. It tells that he died for me; and I cannot fear the punishment which he has already borne.

"Act of Love.—I receive this bread and wine as a love-token from my Saviour's hands. He gives it me as a memento of his love. He delights to rest in his love towards me, and would not have me forget him.

"Act of Hope.—I receive this bread and wine as a pledge that my Lord will come again, to wipe away all tears from my eyes, and bid sorrow and sighing cease. I eat and drink of this feast till he comes; then, free from this humbling trial, I shall sit down with joy at the marriage-supper of the Lamb.

"Act of Praise.—I praise thee, O God, for pardoning love, for chastening love, for sympathizing love, for sustaining love, for unfailing love, that shall and must triumph over every enemy.

"Act of Self-Dedication.—In extreme weakness, I give myself to thee: teach me to suffer, when I cannot do thy will; work in me

the holiness I desire, but have scarcely strength to seek myself. Amen."

Christmas came round again, and found her in much the same state. It seemed pretty clear that the new remedy, which had been diligently persevered in, would not bring much relief to her. She says, in a note to her sister H——, "My present path seems to become more, rather than less, uncertain as to health." In a little memorandum-book, given to her for the new year, the motto chosen for her, and written in the first page, was,—

> "Father, I wait thy daily will,
> Thou shalt divide my portion still;
> Give me on earth what seems thee best,
> Till death and heaven reveal the rest."

It was affecting to see how earnestly she strove to keep up an interest in her little manual occupations, which could hardly fail, as time passed on, to become wearisome to a mind which retained its keen relish for intellectual pleasures. "Do pray especially for your Fan this week, dearest," (she writes to her sister H——,) "that her love to Jesus may be quickened, so as to make her little work a real *inte-*

rest to her for his sake." From the same high motive, she overcame her natural reluctance to be the subject of observation to strangers during her frequent attacks, and admitted one of the village girls into her room, that she might give her lessons in ornamental work, and thus put within her reach a means of support.

February was a month of solemn memories. She writes to H——, "I feel sure your thoughts have been this week, like our's, taken up with the remembrance of this time two years ago: my dear sisters have seemed to remember almost every hour's events, and to have lived it over again. I cannot realize this, as it is to me like the rest of the last six years,—in so thick a mist that I cannot clearly remember any part of it. But you must ask for me, darling, that its sanctifying and earth-weaning effects may not be the less felt."

The growing unselfishness of her affection was strongly marked in these closing months. The time had been when it was as much of a pain as a refreshment to leave her even for a short visit, because she found it impossible to conceal how much she dreaded the separation; now, though the love was ever growing more

tender and clinging, and the need of support certainly as great as formerly, she could yield a hearty assent to even a prolonged absence. Her sister C—— was Mr. Birks's companion in a missionary journey to the Channel Islands this spring. In reference to it, F— writes:—

"My own C——:—Bessie and I can sympathize famously now for each other, though we would not for very much, even in wish, delay or hinder your journey, but rather pray for special enjoyment and blessing in it to you. It is a real comfort to feel to-day that my own C——'s return is (D.V.) a whole week nearer; but I was somewhat dismayed to find that I must *fast* for tidings of thee next week, my pet, from *Saturday* to *Thursday*, which sounds very hard to a *greedy* heart like your Fan's. The mails only go and return three times a week: so there is no choice about it. Forgive a stupid note: the sickness has been very persevering the last three days, so this head is good for very little: but my darling Bessie spends chief of her time with me, and I am well taken care of. Fond love from

"Your own

"FAN."

"Bessie" gives her own version of this time:—

"We are going on, thank God, most prosperously in our solitude. Fan seems really happy. I am very much with her, and I feel it is really good, since her comfort must depend so much on our sympathy, to be thrown thus completely on her manner of life. It is not oppressively dull to me, for I must sometimes exchange it for my baby's lovely smiles, and the merry glee of my happy nursery, or the quiet refreshment of our family worship, or village duties, or my F——'s lessons. But when I remember that all these things are just what she is excluded from, I do feel able to realize the monotony of her life."

Little as any change was suspected by herself or those around her, the sands of this "monotonous life" were running low: patience had almost had its perfect work. One more little note was written to her sister before her return:—

"My own darling C——:—I trust I shall be more prosperous in my endeavours this

afternoon for a small chat. Many thanks for thy note to-day. Oh, the merciful joy there is in thinking that, when this reaches you, you will be, please God, within an hour of starting *homewards!* And where do you think your Fan has been since she last wrote to you, dearest? I do not think you would guess: so I will tell you forthwith. The church? Yes. Not content with going out to tea last night, on the lawn, (which was certainly somewhat 'giddy ways,' in such condition,) I went, after tea, to the church, in our kind T——'s arms. Was it not good of him? Oh, it did bring such a strange tide of feeling over one's mind! it was quite a solemn time! and I do like to feel that I know now where you sit and kneel on Sunday. . . .

"Your own

"FAN."

CHAPTER XIV.

LAST ILLNESS—ITS IMMEDIATE CAUSE—SUNSET CLOUDS—INTERCOURSE WITH HER BROTHER AND SISTERS—LAST SACRAMENT—EARTHLY CARES DISPOSED OF—LAST CONVERSATION—DEATH—THE WEARY ONE AT REST.

It will be remembered that before her visit to Torquay, Fanny's life was seriously threatened by consumption. As the head-disease advanced, the symptoms of the other were less apparent, the cough gradually ceased, and the mischief in the lungs became latent. It had been given as a medical opinion, that she was the subject of *two* maladies, either of them sufficient to destroy life, but neither of which made fatal progress, because held in check by the other. Sometimes, when oppressed with the mental darkness and distress which accompanied the disease in her head, she was tempted to cast a longing look towards what had once appeared to be God's purpose concerning her; but the "furnace of waiting," to which some of her notes allude, had not been heated in vain; and when at length the mes-

senger *did* come, he found her quietly accepting her Father's will.

On the 30th of June she was seized, while sitting in her easy-chair, with one of her worst attacks; her whole frame was severely convulsed, and before she could be laid upon her bed, some sprain or injury happened to the right side. For a few days it gave her little inconvenience; but in the course of a week she was suffering all the agony of acute inflammation, and, before it had been fairly subdued by active treatment, the return of cough and hectic fever showed that disease had been propagated to the lungs, and rekindled there the flame which for years had been harmlessly smouldering. "We are increasingly uneasy about Fan," writes one of her sisters: "she has now been a fortnight without any appetite, burning fever comes on at night, and her breath is laboured and painful, with a hard, dry cough. To-night her pulse is 140. We can as yet hardly realize the anxiety, while every day seems to aggravate it. She has been so often in danger, so continually suffering, without any probability of its leading to a rapid termination, that we have almost ceased to believe she could be taken from us; and this

perhaps the more willingly as her unselfishness, her perfect patience and cheerfulness, made us every year cling to her more closely. In her room, and the life bound up with it, we seem to have a phase of our Watton life preserved to us almost unbroken; and upon the grievous blank of its absence I cannot for a moment bear to dwell."

The progress of disease was very rapid. On the 27th of July, Mr. —— not only gave a decided opinion as to the impossibility of her recovery, but wished that her absent brother and sister should be sent for, as from the state of her breath he thought it probable that gangrene of the lung might come on, which would be attended with sudden sinking. It may, perhaps, be anticipated by those who have read the details of her dark and cloudy day, that there would be a compensating gladness at the hour of sunset; but to the last there was more or less of spiritual conflict, and the head-symptoms, though mitigated, recurred at intervals, and were peculiarly distressing as bodily strength declined. A record, kept by one of her sisters, and generally written during her turn of night-watching, will best supply the details of the last fortnight. "She was

not in the least agitated when told Mr. ——'s opinion. Bessie reminded her that she did not wish to cast off her hope in Christ, therefore she might be assured he did not wish to cast her off. She looked up earnestly: 'I do think I have come to him.' Afterwards, in a fit of coughing, I said, 'There will be no cough there.' 'No,' she replied; 'but the best is, there will be no sin there.' Again, in the afternoon, I spoke of her meeting our blessed father. 'What a meeting!' 'It will be indeed,' she said; 'but—do you know?—I have scarcely thought of it beside the meeting with Jesus. That is indeed a glorious thought.' Sitting beside her, and realizing her hope, we can at times forget our sorrow in her joy. At supper-time I thought she was dozing; but she opened her eyes with a sweet smile: 'I'm getting hold of my sheet-anchor, dear. "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out."'"

July 28.—Fan slept more, and seems altogether a little better. "I think peace is indeed coming," she said to me this morning. The very atmosphere of her room is peace to-day; her face beams with it. She smiles even in

her sleep. "I cannot think much," she said, this afternoon; "but the Lord graciously keeps away the thoughts which might be so terrible to me now." The improvement lasted through the day, and we began to feel doubtful about having sent for E—— and H——; but Mr. ——, who came before tea, told us it was a mere fluctuation, the only question being whether she could live days or weeks.

July 29.—Our Fan has more fever and cough to-day. She has spoken little. There has been a good deal of inward conflict, but not continued gloom. H—— came at three P.M. It is a blessed comfort to be together. As we were preparing for the night in F——'s room, a fit of coughing came on, which threatened immediate suffocation and alarmed us all very much. She was so exhausted as to sink into a doze the moment the gasping was at all quieted. We had not left her when E—— drove up to the door. He had started immediately on receiving C——'s note: so we are permitted to gather together to share the mercies God intends for us as a family in this sorrow. How it reminded us of February, 1850!

July 30.—A most painful night in our dear

sick-room. Her little stock of strength must be wearing out fast; but, thank God! her spirit catches the reflection of heaven's sunshine as it approaches. E—— had brought her a brilliant bunch of carnations from Dorsetshire. She admired them, but added, smiling, "What are these to the colours round about the throne!"

July 31.—Fan had rather more sleep; but she is so patient it is difficult to know when she is suffering. She had two bad attacks this morning, which were followed by a heavy, unnatural sleep. Mr. —— thought her weaker. She was pleased to hear his opinion. "Beautiful things are before me," she said.

Aug. 2. *Monday.*—Disease is making steady progress; but as the outward man perishes, the inward man is renewed. She repeated that text to me with so much pleasure, "His servants shall serve him, to be able to serve him, to do his will without drawbacks. It is a delightful thought." Alluding to the grounds of the measure of assurance she enjoys, she said, "I can truly say that I come to him day by day." C—— reminded her "that it might be God was to be more glorified by the steadfastness of her faith, in and through conflict,

than by her rejoicing in spiritual triumph;" and the thought seemed precious to her.

Aug. 3.—She was so over-taxed with cough and sleeplessness yesterday that Mr. —— gave her morphia at night. She slept all night through. The effect continues, to our surprise, to-day, hour after hour. She is overpowered with sleep. She looks up when roused, takes her meals or medicine, and then the heavy eyelids droop again: as if unable even to support her head on the pillow, it bends on one side like the white cup of a lily of the valley. Two or three times when roused her gush of thankfulness for the rest was quite touching. "Oh, it was beautiful! I had a delicious night; it was such a mercy." Feeling the oppression at her chest, and too dreamy to understand it, she put her hands on it, and said, with a look which went to our hearts, "My chest is wasting away."

Aug. 4. *Wednesday.*—The extreme drowsiness continues; but it appears more like the effect of utter exhaustion, this morning. She looks up languidly when spoken to, welcomes you with a loving smile; but, while in the very act of speaking, her eyes close, and she sleeps in the middle of her sentence. Our beloved

brother's heart was full with the necessity of leaving her. We felt it a mercy that he should have had an opportunity of seeing in the last two days that future intercourse with her was likely to be very limited. She seemed quite unable to appreciate that he was leaving her finally, looking at him with a fond smile as he held her hand, but scarcely speaking. For the last time an unbroken band of brother and sisters, we knelt in prayer around her bed: our next act of worship, all six together, will be one of praise around the throne. The rest of the day was passed chiefly in drowsiness. Once she said to C——, "I *do* feel Christ is precious; I could not do without him now." And in the evening H—— overheard her murmuring to herself, "There the weary are at rest."

Aug. 5. *Thursday.*—A bad attack in the middle of this morning made dearest F—— seem fearfully ill. We watched her almost in doubt whether consciousness would ever return; and when this passed, and she could smile at us again, the look of extreme exhaustion was scarcely less alarming. Towards night, the usual fever seemed to rekindle the flame of life, and she opened her mind freely

to C——, with whom for so long she has had no reserves. When alone with her, C—— said,—

"I shall soon be without my Fan."

"Do you really think so?"

"What would you like about receiving the Sacrament?"

"I don't know what to think: my great doubtings make me hesitate."

"Doubtings as to whether you are a child of God, my own one?"

"Yes."

"But you don't doubt that you wish to come to Jesus. The Sacrament is one means of coming: perhaps in it he will give you a clearer assurance."

"A means of coming? Yes. Then I should wish it, if dear T—— likes."

"Would you wish to wait till Sunday? Perhaps you will not be here then. Shall we have a family Sacrament round your bed?"

"Oh, that would be very pleasant. But do you really think it is so near?"

"Why, I see you getting weaker every day."

"Yes, I cannot deny that." Seeing a distressed look, C—— added,—

"I trust, my own darling, you are not harassed with distressing doubts?"

"Well, I think I can say I have come to Jesus; but it is *hope*, not *assurance*."

"No one around you, my precious one, has any thing short of assurance about you; but, I know, when a soul is passing away to its God, the opinion of friends is not enough. So now let us think. Jesus has sent his offer of salvation unto all; but the great barrier is, men are unwilling. You know you are not unwilling. Did you change your own will? No. He made you willing in the day of his power. Will he leave his own work unfinished?"

After a moment's silence, "That is very comforting." And then, looking up, "Lord Jesus, come to me." The cough interrupted her. "Oh, dear!" she said: "trying to pray makes me cough, and I *can't* do without praying. What shall I do?" C—— reminded her a voiceless prayer would reach God's ear.

A happy look came over her. "It is very bright," she said, "to be so near,—to leave all suffering and to go to such glory." A fond smile lighted up her face. She kissed C——'s hand repeatedly. "My precious C——, my darling, you have been more to me than any

one. The Lord bless thee abundantly." C—— said, "My Fan in her bright home will think of her C—— still buffeting with the waves of temptation, but getting nearer the shore; and C—— will try to quiet her grief by looking up to her darling's home." The fond kisses were repeated. "Oh, if I might think I should be permitted to do any thing for *you* there, I seem as if I should be waiting about the doors of heaven till you come in." Every word was an effort with the gasping breath, and C—— persuaded her to be quiet.

Soon after, A—— said, "It will be so sweet to think of you without suffering or weariness."

"Without *sin*," she said, "without *temptation*. Those are the two points: no sin, no temptation. Oh, how blessed!" She then whispered to C——, "I have more peace; I am more happy."

"Is it any special thought which gives you peace?"

"I think with more comfort that I *have* come to Jesus: for years I have prayed to have my sins washed away in his blood, to have his righteousness put upon me. But," (as if recollecting herself,) "I must pray not to trust in my prayers, but only in Christ."

Some one came in. After a loving greeting, she turned again to C——: "Was I right in what I said last? Is not there a danger of my trusting in the prayers?" C—— reminded her the prayers were the *evidences* by which her faith was made manifest. "Then just pray with me, that I may not put trust in any evidence, but only in Christ." C—— prayed with her, and she continued to pray for herself very earnestly, but with a perplexed expression. C—— asked her "how it was with her." "Satan," she said, "is very busy, and I get so confused." C—— reminded her how little her head would bear, and told her her part was simply to come to Jesus,—to cast her soul on him; he would answer the enemy for her. She looked up, and said, "I cast my soul on Jesus. Amen."

Later in the evening, she said to C——, "I have had such comfort in one thought."

"What thought, my own darling?"

"Why, Christ's intercession. I have come to him: so I am sure he prays for me, and you know God *must* hear *him*. I can't be lost if Christ prays for me."

Aug. 6. *Friday.*—Last night was very trying with cough and breathlessness. This

evening we were able to accomplish her wish, and join once more in the Lord's Supper round her bed. All were there; C—— at Fan's side. The evening was closing in, and our night of weeping seemed very near; but we could not remember that it was our last united sacrament on earth, without looking forward to the marriage-supper of the Lamb, where we should next assemble, an unbroken family circle. T—— gave us a beautiful selection from that most beautiful service, and, as our darling Fan received the sacred elements, the word flashed into our minds, "I will drink no more of the fruit of the vine until I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." She was able to enter into it more than we expected. We thought the breath alarmingly rapid later in the evening; but it was quieted by morphia, and she gained some refreshing sleep.

Aug. 7. *Saturday.*—There was a little incoherence in the night, and at times throughout the day. It reminded us of our dear father's in its character; so like the playfulness of a child. I think she was indulging the hope that this would be what she called her "glory-day," and that her Sabbath would

ue spent "at home." All her little earthly cares had been settled last week. C—— had made out for her a list of her possessions, and with a pencil she had put against each the initials of those to whom she left them. Her Bible, the companion of ten years, was for C——, and the trembling fingers managed to trace in the first page the words, "Father, I will that they whom thou hast given me be with me where I am." "I chose that text for you, my C——, because I thought it would be the best comfort, if you missed Fan, to think that Jesus *wished* to have her." How it went to C——'s heart to hear of her saying to Bessie, "It comforts me to think how good it will be for my C—— when Fan is safely lodged: she will feel sad and lonely at first, but that will pass away, and I know she has often tried her health with nursing me."

Aug. 8. *Sunday.*—Dearest F—— was partially under the influence of her opiate in the morning. C—— read to her during service-time a few sentences from the Litany; she dropped asleep. When she roused and found the book put away, she was so indignant with herself: "Where could my soul be, that I should sleep while you were reading?" She

was more wakeful in the afternoon, and spoke to Bessie, with a beaming eye and peculiar emphasis, of her death. "I shall be with Jesus! it will be *glorious:* it will be *delicious.* I shall be *safe* with Jesus!" How many Sunday afternoons Fan and Bessie have spent together! This was the last.

In the evening H—— and C—— were both engaged in prayer for her. She was sleeping, and H—— was quite arrested by the lovely, joyous smile playing over her features. She woke in a few minutes, exclaiming, "I have had *such* a doze,—a blessed doze! I was with Jesus. I think he had hold of my hand. I have been so happy! *The Lord has been manifesting himself unto me.*" But it seemed as if the blessedness had been too great for her to express or describe. So graciously all our prayers for her have been more than answered!

Aug. 9. *Monday.*—The morning was spent in a heavy, motionless torpor, which strongly reminded us of our dear father's: no noise disturbed her; with her head thrown back, and her eyes open, she continued in the same position, without moving, her deep breathing never once disturbed by the cough which had been so incessant. We thought it was death,

and watched beside her for a change, till the hours seemed interminable. Consciousness, however, to our surprise, returned in the afternoon. She asked to have the window near her bed opened. A flood of sunshine was lighting up the golden harvest-field, and the view which she has so loved has seldom looked more beautiful. Fondly, steadfastly, she gazed; and then, as if satisfied with her farewell to the glories of earth and sky, she motioned to have the curtains again drawn. We spoke to her of the heaven to which she was so near: "The sooner the better," she said.

The breathlessness increased to a paroxysm, at ten P.M., very terrible to witness. Even when supported upright in the bed, the suffocation was intolerable. We stood around her, but, oh, how powerless to help! She gasped out an entreaty for a word of prayer, and we knelt, earnestly petitioning that, if it were the Lord's will, relief might be sent. We felt we were answered, in at least an interval of comparative ease,—though the paroxysm returned in the night, and it touched us to the quick to hear of her saying, "I did not know it was so hard to die."

Aug. 10. *Tuesday.*—Soothed by the mor-

phia, she was laid quietly back when we went in to her in the morning, the breath still very laborious, but the appearance of distress was gone; there was an expression of peace, at times brightening into her own fond smile, which totally contrasted with yesterday's torpor; and we were ready to think her a little better. About noon, however, Fan suddenly sprang up from her pillows, exclaiming, in a thrilling and strangely altered voice, "The Lord *will* help!—he *will* help!" Mr. —— came in at the moment. She evidently knew him, for she turned to him with a look of eager inquiry, "Is this dying?" He knew she would hear without alarm that the end was very near, and she murmured over and over again, "*Nice, nice, nice, indeed!*" There was no more apparent consciousness, though she lingered for four hours. Once she made an effort to smile at C——, love faithful even unto death; but no words could be distinguished. We held in our's the little hands which for the last month had been burning with fever: gradually they chilled under the touch of death, until their marble coldness told us that the life-current had almost ceased to flow. With sore hearts we witnessed the

struggles of nature with the last enemy; but towards the close the deep, difficult breathing became soft as an infant's. Her posture was unchanged; the eye still fixed upwards; the intervals became longer, and we held our own breath while we watched for the return of her's. There was a momentary struggle in the frail tenement as the spirit burst its bonds. another gentle sigh, and our darling was at rest forever in the bosom of Jesus!

Glorious was that summer evening, with its rampart of sunset clouds: it seemed like a glimpse into her home; and those whom she had left behind were ready to fancy that the soft breezes brought back to them the echo of her song of praise.

Peace was written on every line of the beloved and beautiful countenance when they returned to the room where she was laid. How could they selfishly grieve? How wish her back again? The suffering, the weary, the tempted one! Their family circle had begun to re-form in glory, and for them it remained to raise their eyes from the darkened, saddened earth, and as their treasures were being gathered above, so to have their hearts and affections there.

CHAPTER XV.

ELIZABETH'S LETTERS TO SUFFERING RELATIVES—THE LOSS OF HER BABE—HER LIFE AT KELSHALL—NEW HOPES—BIRTH OF TWINS—SUDDEN ALARM—VISIT OF HER BROTHER-IN-LAW—DAY OF SUSPENSE—FATAL SINKING—THE LAST SLEEP—THE RESURRECTION MORNING.

WE have accompanied the long-tried *sufferer* to the threshold of her home; we return now to her who was still actively engaged in *working* for her Lord. The special office which Elizabeth had sustained towards Fanny did not altogether cease when that beloved one was removed. Another member of her family was brought under the discipline of tedious illness, and her mother's growing infirmities called forth all her filial sympathies. From her correspondence with suffering relatives or friends we shall select such extracts as appear calculated to meet the difficulties and cheer the sorrows of those who are learners in the same school.

"I cannot wonder at the tone of depression in your note this morning. There is much

new to weigh down your poor body,—weakness, sharp pain, solitude, weariness. It is rather a special mark of divine support that your spirits have been kept up as they have been. I will give you this word of comfort: 'He is a rock; his work is perfect.' He has been working, you feel in your soul he has, and that by the means he is most sparing of, most loath to use,—the sufferings of his own dear child. His work is *perfect:* it will not, as the enemy whispers, prove all in vain. You may seem to slide back, and here will be matter for humiliation and watchfulness; but when, from your resting-place in your future home, you trace your past course, these months of suffering will be marked as months of progress. Your spirit, used to the hot-house air of the sick-room, will seem chilled into worldliness when you mingle with the duties of earth again, but it will not be so worldly as it was before: a savour of Christ's hidden presence will remain, which you will feel has been worth all the suffering. Oh, dear, let us be content to be very empty, and just wait beside the Fountain-Head till the streams begin to gush forth."

"As to your mental struggles, my ——, do not be disheartened: your seclusion has fixed your mind's eye on the weakness and evil within, which always exists, but of which we are too often unconscious. I dare not say I think you have been struggling too earnestly; for in my conscience I believe that it is in hours of solitude and suffering we see eternal realities as they are. This, however, I do feel, there is an *emotional* region of our spiritual life intimately connected with our bodily, especially with our nervous, health. It is to this region the mind first turns in self-scrutiny: 'Do I love? Do I rejoice? Do I hope? Do I desire?' and often, very often, brings back a desponding answer, 'Love, joy, hope, desire, seem all extinct.' I believe the general numbness of the faculties occasioned by disease has much to do with this, and that, instead of a convulsive effort to love or to hope, it is better to bring the soul as quite empty to Jesus, saying, 'Lord, thou commandest the exercise of a spiritual faculty which I have not: give me the faculty. I desire to raise my withered hand: speak the power-inspiring word.' Then wait in patient faith. Dwell quietly, but without agitation,

or feverish watching of the effect on your own mind, on the All-Lovely One. Perhaps there may be no glow of feeling; his time is not come. Wait still. You are laying in fresh kindling-wood as you store your mind with thoughts of his grace; and when the spark from heaven falls, the light and heat will rejoice you. Perhaps it will be the removing of a veil. The Lord's Spirit will bear witness with your spirit that when you seemed most dark and cheerless you were really seeking with a child's earnestness of love, and then you will rejoice in the evidence of adoption.

"You must carefully avoid overstraining your mind. I should recommend your trying something of amusing reading,—not an exciting tale which would *engross* your thoughts; I know by experience how conscience revolts against that; but just something to turn off your attention at times from your own inward struggles. An exhausted mind is apt to see every thing through a false medium. Much of the intensity of your present feelings, whether for suffering or for good, will probably pass off when your thoughts are distracted with the busy scenes of life again;

but I feel confident you will find you have been passing through a time of spiritual enrichment worth all the suffering."

"I am so glad you tell me when your little heart grows rather heavy; it is such a comfort to me to let it all out to my T—— when a dark fit comes on, I fancy it must be a relief to others too to unbosom themselves. You 'knew it was mainly physical depression.' Then Jesus was glorified in the patient endurance of it,—in a willingness to wait till he made the sun shine again from behind the cloud. You loved him, or you would not so instinctively have turned to him for relief; you feared him, or it would not have been such anguish to think he was turning away; but you did not quite *trust* him enough, or you could have waited more calmly. We must not forget the *confidence* of love is as precious to the human heart of the God-man as to our own. There is a degree of pleasure to a loving heart in the jealousy, the suspicion, which tells that its affection is prized; but there is far higher joy in meeting with a trusting love too deep and full to admit any

of these suspicions and jealousies; and have we not cause for such a love?"

"Your long letter deserved a far better answer than it is likely to get, for, as you say, in these days we are obliged to arrange our affairs otherwise than Madame Methuselah would have done. But a word of love I must send. . . . As to your own state, my ——, it seems hard to be doing nothing, when work is on every side,—souls perishing, the labours of others progressing, and at times the conscious mental and spiritual power to work, swelling high in your bosom. But what is your God himself doing? is he not *restraining to work?* is he not withholding his gospel from perishing nations, permitting the best efforts of his children to be crossed, apparently *not* working, when a mighty work is to be done? It is not want of love, it is Infinite Wisdom, seeing that that work cannot, consistent with decrees stretching far beyond our ken, yet all-wise, all-gracious, be done. All you think you would do belongs to *this* work; or, if it does not, it will be done without you. Meanwhile you have your work: there is one plant on which the Heavenly Gardener desires

to lavish especial graces; and, while you would fain be sowing seed broadcast among the furrows, he bids you lie indolently, as it seems, beside it, pick off each dead leaf, brush away every invading insect, train each springing shoot. Are his views narrow? it is but one plant. No, it is a plant that is to bloom for ages! thousands in brighter worlds may rejoice in it, and none will say too much pains was bestowed on its earliest growth. Dear ——, this plant is growing in your heart; rejoice over it, and wait God's time patiently."

"I can well understand the depression your letters sometimes breathe; it is not only the actual suffering of illness, but the necessary suspension of all the more stirring duties which shake the mind out of sad musings. Sometimes God gives that very bright spirit-joy which makes illness a glad time; but I do not think it is his usual dispensation. He generally makes it an humbling, quieting, spirit-testing time; and we must trust him in the inner as well as the outer working of his providence. If we were viewing a wide landscape, with flitting clouds and sunbeams, we should not hesitate to say God shaped the

course of each passing cloud, and ordered which field should be bathed in sunshine. The great landscape of truth is around us, but it is the sunlit portion on which our eyes rest,—the truth on which God pleases that the sunbeam of realizing power shall that moment fall. Sometimes it is our own sinfulness: the sunbeam is so vivid we cannot turn our eye away, dreary as that wilderness is; yet, while we look, how precious Jesus grows! Sometimes it is a strong sense of conflict, lasting conflict, that must be struggled through. How spirit-weary we feel! yet, while we look, what longings are growing up for our heavenly rest! how sweet it seems in contrast! Sometimes it is an overwhelming sense of responsibility. But, oh, how that leads to the strong for strength! Let us be content God should cast the sunbeam on the truth we most need to learn; only, if the sunbeam rest on some desert ground, let us remember that is not the whole landscape: there are waving corn-fields and shady valleys which will be sunlit soon."

One of Elizabeth's graceful little parables was sent to this correspondent, yet further to comfort her under the suspension of active duties.

THE WILD ROSE AND THE CORN-FIELD.

It was the end of June; the tall, green ears of wheat, not yet ripened by the golden sunshine, waved gently in the breeze, and gave promise of a most abundant harvest; while the air was filled with the delicate scent of the wild roses, which hung in profusion over the leafy hedge. Those beautiful roses! how graceful were the festoons formed by their light-green boughs! how pure the tender blush which touched their pearl-like blossoms! The little child, who played beneath the hedge, had rejoiced in their wild profusion, and learned his first infant lesson of thanksgiving, as he praised the God who made the lovely flowers. The maiden, with her heart so quickly responsive to the touch of beauty, had looked at them till soft tears filled her eyes, as she thought of the fulness of beauty which must dwell in Him who could make earthly things so fair. The anxious, care-worn child of sorrow had looked on them with a lightened heart, repeating to herself the sacred words, "If God so clothed the grass of the field, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?" But the rose knew nothing of all this: she hung there

in her unconscious beauty, and drooped her fair head in sorrow because she was useless to all, whilst the waving corn before her would supply the food of hundreds. Yes, the corn would supply the bodily wants of hundreds; but had the rose done less in ministering to the higher wants of man's immortal spirit? in teaching thankfulness to the child, devotion to the maiden, patient confidence to the poor? God had clothed her with beauty, and by that beauty she fulfilled his work. Even thus is it with many of his children upon earth: they would fain, as the corn-plant, be employed in some mission of manifest usefulness; they would feed the hungry, clothe the naked and relieve the distressed: but his providence forbids it; sickness, or some other hindrance, withholds them from the work; and they hang their heads in sorrow, under a painful sense of uselessness. Not so, afflicted Christian! you may be as the fair roses of God's harvest-field. He has all beauty wherewith to clothe you, spirit-graces which shine brighter as the body decays. Though withheld from all active service, you shall be living witnesses for him. Your love, your patience, your gentle thankfulness, shall

be a holy, soothing influence on all around; while you may never know here below how many a holy thought you have awakened in the breasts of others, and how when you seemed to be an idler you were really working in the choicest part of the Lord's vineyard.

In August, 1854, the month when Fanny had been taken home, Elizabeth writes to an absent sister, "I fear, my darling, the last few weeks have been trying ones to you,—that you have had 'conflicts at memory's gate.' But these conflicts, these gushes of past sorrow returning upon the soul, are as much part of God's training as the trial itself was. We are often under special discipline when others little know it; but our Father has planned it. Oh, what rest of soul that is! You will be thinking, my ——, what a bright birthday* this is in heaven. How safely now the wish may be uttered that used to fall so heavily on our dear sufferer's ear! Each must be a *happy* return now." In the same letter she speaks of her baby-boy, then about six weeks old, who had been dedicated to the

* The letter was written on the 16th of August, Fanny's birthday.

service of God on the previous Sunday. "I know your thoughts would be with us on Sunday afternoon. My little Harry thrives beautifully. His nurse contrives to make him sleep, and feed, and do all such infantile duties to order, and in the intervals he lies looking so happy, and listening with such complacency to any nonsense talked to him, it is quite a delight to have him in one's arms."

Elizabeth had been made familiar with bereavement by the loss of father and sister; but as yet her happiness as a mother was untouched. She could now number six precious gifts of God's love, and they seemed to fill her daily cup of mercy to overflowing. Many anxious prayerful thoughts were mingled with the fond mother's joy as she watched and directed the moral and mental development of the elder ones; but her babe was always to her the very holiday and sunshine of life, —none more so than the little summer-gift of this year. Her letters to her sister a month later, when a messenger was sent for her little Harry and by a short sharp illness he was taken to his Saviour's bosom, may comfort the hearts of some bereaved parents:—

"KELSHALL, Sept. 19, 1854

'MY OWN DEAR SISTER:—Our babe is gone. He died this morning. It seems strange that my own especial sister has never seen him. Oh, if you could now! he looks so lovely. A smile on his mouth, his brow so pure and bright, telling what he might have been on earth, but surely also what he will be when Jesus has trained him in heaven. I have a foolish craving to know more about how he is tended now, for surely it is baby-spirit; but it is with Jesus; that is enough. The verse his mother has often striven to grasp for herself shall without a break be true of him: 'All thy children shall be taught of the Lord, and great shall be the peace of thy children.' I did not know the parting would be such a pang,—a peep into a gulf I had not looked down before. It is something very different from our former losses; something all my own,—part of my daily life. But, darling ——, I had been praying to be taught to hate sin more: ought I to murmur when God answers my prayer by showing it to me in its hateful fruit, death? for, oh! death in itself is very, very evil. Our treasure seemed to suffer fear-

fully yesterday. . . . Thank God, it was quiet at the last, and he sunk gently. . . .

"Your own loving sister,

"E. S. B."

"Sept. 22.

"Thanks, my own sister, for your note. I had felt very weary, and the sense of blank, and yet of all that had to be done, had been very oppressive: yet I trust Jesus was present through all. I hope it will not be a transient impression. When the bitterness comes it seems almost too weariful, and when other things drive it away a little, and my spirits rise, I almost dread losing the sound of God's voice. I never expected it to be a life-embittering trial; but it was a sharp wrench. We longed for you yesterday to sketch the precious one. Such spirit-loveliness as his marble face wore I cannot describe: it was infantile, yet so intellectual; the features, somewhat sharpened by death, all most exquisitely chiselled; the sweet blue eyes half open, so there was no look of death, but an air of calm satisfied waiting for the good things yet in store. It was quite a mercy to me; a message from heaven seemed written there, satisfying

every wish concerning him. It is not so fair to-day. The eyes have sunk a little, and there is an impression of the sadness of earth's decay. The other look was from heaven, and will be a precious memory. I think, darling, my little Harry will be to us all the flower of the household. Only a few days ago I was saying, 'This boy will perhaps grow up to be a poet,'—he was so quiet, so gentle, he loved the soft evening light so much. What a boon it is to have had him! . . .

"Your own affectionate

"E. S. B."

On the evening of his funeral she writes :—

"Our darling is laid in his silent home. The wind howled round. It was a strange contrast to his cradle-pillow, but not so bitter as I thought. God has the springs of feeling so under his own control, and he did not bid the waves rise. Now next week life must begin again : pray for me, my ——, that it may be with a sense of nearness to Jesus, which may brace my spirit again. It feels just now enervated and unstrung,—which would be a sad fruit of his chastening hand resting on us."

"My own Darling:—I know your heart has been so much with me of late I ought to write often to you. Oh, my ——-, the world is full of kindness! I have had so many kind notes from the outer as well as the inner circle. One anonymous, from Cheltenham, from some one who saw it, I suppose, in the 'Record,' and sent a packet of 'Groom's little Hymns,' 'from one who sympathized with Mrs. Birks in the loss of her babe.' I do not think, darling, those are the most spirit-testing trials. They clench the heart sadly; but there is such support both within and without. I believe He who reads all looks most anxiously on those of his children who, like you, are annealing in the more gradual heat of the slow furnace. The continuance of sorrow takes away the strength that would meet it; the spring of joy is dried up, and then there is such complete emptiness,—just that emptiness which Jesus wants, which compels the weary spirit to throw itself on him.

"Your own affectionate sister,

"E. S. B."

"Christmas, 1854.

"What a comfort it is, darling ——, in

looking forward into the dim vista of another year, to feel that its now unknown joys and sorrows will be meted out by our tenderest Friend! The thought of the absolute necessity of each suffering we bear, came before me forcibly the other day in this light. God's future kingdom is a living whole; each member has its own place, which, and which alone, it can fill; and for this place some special training is required. To alter that training would imply the altering of the whole economy of God's providence; the possibility of his choosing that which is less perfect instead of the scheme his infinite wisdom has wrought out. There seems such repose of soul when we can rest on him; for the love of Calvary forbids us to think the sufferings we bear can be indifferent to him. My Harry's grave-stone is put down with this inscription:—

'HERE SLEEPS IN JESUS,
ALBERT HENRY,
SON OF THE REV. T. R. BIRKS, RECTOR.'

Then the date, and my favourite text for him, 'He shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom.' The stone is just what I wished; it is a baby's grave. It is a

strange caprice, perhaps, but I dare not, at times, trust myself with what brings back to me my *baby*. My child in heaven I can think of, but not the *baby* I have lost; it makes me long too much to have such a fountain of joy again: yet I ought to be content to have the last link of my golden chain fastened above. . . .

"Your own affectionate sister,

"E. S. B."

"Jan. 1, 1855

"My own ——: . . . I have been trying to realize the duty of hope; *lightening* every doubt, difficulty and temptation with hope. '*This* burden shall be removed, *this* sin shall be conquered, *this* grace shall be given.' It is not more than we have a warrant for; yet, if it were realized, what a fresh spring of life it would give! We had a solemn Sunday here yesterday: the feeling that it was the last in the year was strong in all our minds. My thoughts would revert to my Harry. Last year I was looking forward so brightly and hopefully; but it has been a very mingled feeling: sometimes a cold shadow of death, sometimes a vivid sense of mercy, untouched forever, now with anxiety. Oh,

what will it be to be quite happy forever! *It is before us*, darling. We must not droop as if there were no hope. The struggling-time will soon be over; and now what mercy mingles with it! . . .

"Your own
"E. S. B."

The following, on the same subject, was written to one who had a warm place in her affection and sympathy, though known to her only by correspondence:—

"KELSHALL, ROYSTON, Oct. 6, 1854.

"Many thanks, my dear friend, for your note; it was very sweet and soothing to me, not so much for the thoughts it contained,—my mind had been resting on them in the sacred interval of quiet between my darling's death and burial,—but for its free, full gush of love. Love is so very sweet, and its joy seems all so purifying. Then thoughts came back to me for you, dear friend, for such I must count you. I thought, it is not wonderful she can do so much by loving; for God is love, and love, even more than power or reason, assimilates us to him. And so she is not

laid aside, as she seems to be. She can do little, think little, when her head aches so sorely; but if he continue her grace to love much, she may yet be an honoured instrument in his hand. I liked your little verses* so much. I have had several sent, I could not follow, describing my little one as bursting suddenly into seraphic energy. I do not think God's buds open thus. My thoughts rest on him as Jesus's baby instead of mine; and the lovely look of holy patient expectancy which I seemed to trace in his exquisitely beautiful remains corresponded exactly to my thoughts about him. He is such a bright spot to me now, though sometimes the sense of a spring of elasticity broken comes back across my spirit: I would it may be with sanctifying,

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* "She is not Dead, but Sleepeth."

"The baby wept:
The mother took it from the nurse's arms,
And soothed its griefs, and still'd its vain alarms,
And baby slept.

"Again it weeps,
And God doth take it from the mother's arms,
From present pain, and future unknown harms.
And baby sleeps."

Dr. Hinds.

not enervating, power. There are some moods in which it is easier to feel than act. I long to have this time of sorrow marked as a time of blessing in my Mothers' Meeting. The first, since my boy's death, will be next Tuesday. I know my poor women's hearts will be tender for me; and I have thought, perhaps, God means to give blessings, sought for months past without any marked answer, through this sorrow. If you are well enough, will you pray for a blessing for us? We meet at three P.M. once a month. It is a precious time to me. I trust your poor head is a little better. We are not likely to meet on earth; but we shall know each other by tokens of love in heaven.

"Yours affectionately,

"E. S. BIRKS."

"Should any sick-room thoughts come to me, I shall sometimes take the liberty of sending them. It is sweet to me to renew the ministry my Fanny required so long; for years I wrote to her weekly."

To the same friend she writes:—

"August 18, 1855.

"MY DEAR FRIEND:—I hear you have been more than usually suffering in body, and,

though you do not easily succumb, I am sure the spirit must in some measure share the weakness and depression of extreme suffering. Do not forget how well your sympathizing Saviour knows this. Think how *you,* who are familiar with every turn of bodily weakness and pain, would deal with a suffering friend; how you would watch the expression of their eye, to see if they were weary when you talked of scenes of active labour; how patiently you would listen if they did often repeat their own tale of suffering; how satisfied, how even delighted, you would be to find it was enough for them to rest their weary head on your shoulder,—that your very presence was in itself a comfort. Just what you would be, what you would feel, to that sick friend, Jesus is and feels to you, only with infinitely more tenderness and fulness of sympathy. As, too, you would try to soothe that suffering friend, by leading her from her sorrow to dwell on themes of future joy, or on the earthly and heavenly love which surrounded her, so he allures your spirit to claim its bright inheritance of gladness even in the midst of grief.

"Your very affectionate

"E. S. Birks."

"Jan. 12, 1855.

"My dear Friend:—It is my little Annie's third birthday; and, while the children are enjoying their half-holiday up-stairs, I must indulge myself with fancying I have crept beside your sofa, and that you are well enough for a little chat. . . . I *must* look for early grace in my children. I know God sometimes tries faith by a long delay; but I feel as if I must consider this a special discipline to be submitted to, if appointed, rather than as his ordinary good will and pleasure.

"You told me I might send you, as I used with my Fan, any thoughts for the sick-room which occurred to me. Sometimes one may be permitted to bear a message from Jesus even to a scholar on a higher form, who is oftener under the Master's immediate teaching. In this hope I will try and trace a thought which passed through my mind some weeks since: 'He shall bring down the heat in a dry place, even the heat with the shadow of a cloud.' The burning sun is still there; but a cloud interposes, and assuages the heat. How many clouds our God has at his command, when we are too much overpowered! To ask that the burning sun might set at mid-day, we might

feel no warrant of faith; but to ask for a merciful cloud to shelter, is only in God's ordinary providence.

"Sickness may be of a class where to ask cure would seem to ask miracle; but we may humbly ask an assuaging cloud, some taste of human love cheering the soul, or, still more, some special taste of Christ's own love, taking from the still existing suffering its power to scorch and burn.

"May God give you many such clouds, dear friend! We feel your love a sweet privilege.

"Yours affectionately,

"E. S. BIRKS."

"'When the poor and needy seek water, and *there is none*, and their tongue faileth for thirst, I the Lord will hear, I the God of Israel will not forsake them.'

"What fuller picture of desolation could be given to meet the saddest experience of the Christian? The *poor* and *needy;* that is what he feels himself. They seek *water;* it is a real want, no luxury, an actual necessary. How often the soul feels, 'There are many things I could dispense with; but what I am now seeking is essential, it is my life: I must

have it.' They seek water; perhaps hope deferred adds its sickness to their heart. They are not without the blessing because they do not care for it. *There is none.* Utter despair; the utterance of the soul in its darkest hour. It looks around on every side with the eagerness of perishing thirst, and no help, no hope, appears; temptation, doubt, fear, perplexity, surround it on every side. Oh, the bitterness of those words, *There is none!* Even in this moment keep fast hold of the anchor of prayer. 'I the Lord will hear them.' If there be no water, it shall gush from the stony rock at his word. If there is no help, cannot the Creator of all things create help, in ways the most unexpected? If there is no peace, no faith, no light, he can bid all spring forth in the thirsty, weary soul.

"Hold on fast in prayer; pray in the dark. Do not ask how the light shall come. Only cling to the promise, 'I the Lord will hear them.'"

In writing to a relative, after giving some family details, she says, "And how is it with you, dearest ——? I seem to know very well. Some brighter times, when, the pressure of bodily suffering being a little removed,

you can look upwards more hopefully, and the prevailing desire of your heart is, 'Oh that as a suffering Christian I may by meek, cheerful patience glorify my Saviour amidst the dear friends with whom I am staying!' and then the very effort, for his sake, to repress complaint brings a soothing calm, a sense of nearness and communion with him. These are the bright times,—a chastened brightness, which contrasts strongly with the merrier scenes around, yet has its own joy. And then there are *dark* times, when the spirit, worn with trying to endure, feels it must give way, paints every thing in its own dark colours, feels all sympathy cold and inadequate, because others can so little sound the depths of its weariness; longs for, needs, bracing tones of energy and encouragement, yet revolts from them as if they were vinegar upon nitre, and is tempted to hug more closely the sorrow which others seem so strangely incapable of reading. * * * *

The year 1855 passed on, and never had Elizabeth's life seemed more crowded with happy and absorbing interests. She would be the first to lay her finger on our lips (for she was self-distrustful almost to a fault)

could she hear our testimony to the unobtrusive course of self-denying activity which made her alike the comfort and the prop of all brought within her influence. The claims on her time were very numerous. Her beloved husband found in her the companion of his thoughts. She took so great a delight in the book he published this year, "The Difficulties of Belief," that she said it had been *a spiritual era* to her to read it. Her widowed and invalid mother had almost transferred to her the confidence and dependence she used to repose in her husband. We have seen the place her nursery held in her heart: she was the sole instructress of her elder children in the schoolroom; and the bond between her and those who served her was ennobled and strengthened by the spiritual aspect in which it was viewed, and by her very tender consideration for their wishes and feelings. We have to add to these home duties the varied claims upon the time of a clergyman's wife,—the village-school, attention to the sick, a District, a Mother's Meeting, conducted by herself, clubs and charities of which she was the manager and accountant: it is plain that her's was no idle life. But, if

her hands were full of work, her heart was also full of love; and all went on smoothly and cheerily under her management. How they could do without her, never for a moment seemed to occur to her family. There are those who are so useful, and so wanted, that there is danger of forgetting, with regard to them, that they hold life on the same frail tenure as others, especially where former health has been so uniformly good as even to lull to security the fond affections which are only too ready to take alarm at the approach of danger

Elizabeth was again permitted "to look forward brightly and hopefully" to the opening of another fountain of mother-love in the birth of a babe. On the 19th of January, 1856, we find her writing a long letter to a dear and valued friend about some arrangements for her mother's comfort. At its close, after alluding to some personal ailments, she says, "Thank God, such passing calamities weigh very lightly: if all life seemed really to us very passing, how light-hearted we should be! Think of me next month, and pray for me that it may be a Sabbath month of rest." Three days later, she writes to the same friend, "I do not feel as if I have any

reason to be uneasy about myself; perhaps I hardly enough for spiritual profit realize possible future danger; but God has so safely brought me through six times of trial. Meanwhile, there is no small amount of luxury in all the love and indulgence one meets with in hours of weakness. I believe the chief danger is getting spoiled." This was written on the 22d of January. On the 24th, she was the happy mother of healthy twin boys. There was a richness and freedom in the double gift which seemed especially intended to comfort her for the loss of her little Harry. "Our darling Bessie is truly a mother in Israel," her beloved brother wrote; and as her tiny treasures nestled beside her, and she listened to their soft breathing, her cup seemed full to overflowing. Once, indeed, a day or two after their birth, an expression escaped her which seemed to show that her daily work hitherto had been felt to be fully up to the limit of her strength. "It seems to me," she said, "as if life would be almost over-full of toil with two little babes in the nursery;" but she was easily persuaded not to burden days of weakness with the cares of returning strength. For two or three days the voice

of joy and praise was in her dwelling, and many a heart in the village was gladdened by the tidings from the Rectory. On the 26th, some unfavourable symptoms appeared; but her medical attendant did not consider that her case required more than careful watching; so that it was a severe shock to her family when, on the morning of Tuesday, the 29th, he spoke of her as in considerable danger. He had not wished that his opinion should be communicated to her; for, with a pulse of 150, it was imperative to avoid all excitement; and when she asked her sister, "Does Mr. —— think me in danger?" an evasive answer was returned. "Whatever happens," she said, quite calmly, "I know that I am safe in Jesus; but," (turning to her husband,) "it would be hard work to part yet, my T——. I hope we shall have many happy years together yet."

At her own wish, a telegraphic message was despatched to her dear brother-in-law at Tunbridge Wells. Immediate attention to the summons, and hard travelling, brought him to Kelshall in the middle of Tuesday night. He was accompanied by a physician in whose skill and judgment her family had reason to

place the strongest confidence. Her state was felt by them both to be highly critical, though not absolutely hopeless. The pulse was the worst feature in her case, and with trembling anxiety it was watched throughout Wednesday. Of course, the most absolute quiet was enjoined. It was a painful effort for those around her to repress her constant and excited desire to talk. Her mind was often wandering; but the broken sentences were generally occupied with prayer or praise. Two restless nights had greatly wearied her, and she asked her husband to pray that God would give her a little sleep. The childlike petition was granted, and she awoke much refreshed. "This is indeed a Sabbath," she said: "it is all rest, all peace." The consuming fever produced parching thirst; but only a very limited quantity of water could safely be allowed. "He will give us to drink of that pure river of the water of life *freely*," she said.

Her brother-in-law had been able to report a gradual improvement in the pulse during the morning of Wednesday; in the afternoon it was more marked. Her family had been told that amendment in this symptom, above all others, would warrant them in hoping for

a favourable issue; and when at five P.M. he was able to come down to them, and say, without hesitation, "Bessie is decidedly better," a thrill of joy and thanksgiving passed from heart to heart. It was a short dream! In one hour from that time, fatal sinking had commenced. The stimulants which had been reserved for such an emergency were given freely, but without effect: no efforts could arrest the rapid ebb of life and strength; and, if none dared to *say* it, all *felt*, that there was nothing more to hope.

The intercourse which had been so strictly forbidden before was now sought in vain. Once, when a very strong stimulant had been given, which seemed to send a shudder through her whole frame, she roused sufficiently to say, "I know I ought to cherish life, for the sake of my little new-born babes;" but the exhaustion was too complete to admit of farewell words, or even looks. She lingered till an hour or two past midnight, completing the week which had elapsed since the birth of her babes; and then, without a struggle, she entered into rest.

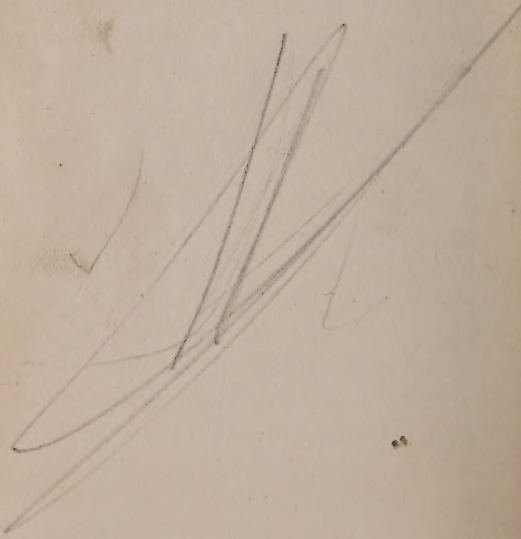
"Angel of Death! we question not.
Who asks of heaven, 'Why doth it rain?'
No 'wherefore?' or 'to what good end?'

Shall out of doubt and anguish creep
Into our thoughts. We bow our heads:
He giveth his beloved sleep."

Instead of the "Sabbath month" for which she had prayed, the Eternal Sabbath had been granted. The years which had seemed in prospect "over-full of toil" were to be spent in His presence, where there is fulness of joy; and, as if to satisfy the yearnings of the mother-heart, while one sweet babe was spared to comfort the sorrowing ones who were left behind, a messenger was, after a few weeks, sent for the other, and, by a short and painless passage, it rejoined her in a better home.

In a corner of the village church-yard, adjoining the rectory garden, the mother and, on either side, a sleeping babe, await the blessed morning which providence and prophecy seem alike to tell is not far distant, when "the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first. Then we, which are alive and remain, shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."

THE END.



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